

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**CRISIS COMMUNICATION IN THE GHANA PRISONS SERVICE:
A CASE STUDY OF THE KUMASI CENTRAL PRISON RIOTS**



MASTER OF ARTS

2022

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**CRISIS COMMUNICATION IN THE GHANA PRISONS SERVICE:
A CASE STUDY OF THE KUMASI CENTRAL PRISON RIOTS**

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**A dissertation in the Department of Strategic Communication,
School of Communication and Media Studies, submitted to the
School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of**

**Master of Arts
(Strategic Communication)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

AUGUST, 2022

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

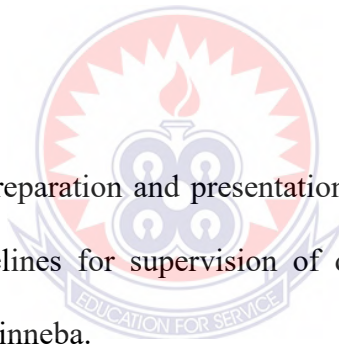
I, **Adwoa Amofaa Agyena**, declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Supervisor's Declaration

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



Name: Asare Okae-Anti

Supervisor's Signature:.....

Date:.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my dear husband, Supt. Frank Ameho, and to my lovely children, Aseye, Mawuko and Mawuli, for their support and encouragement during the course of the study.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am particularly grateful to the Almighty God, for giving me the strength, sound mind and direction to pursue this programme successfully. I am heartily thankful to my supervisor, Kwabena Asare Okae-Anti, who made me believe in myself and guided me through the whole process. I am eternally grateful. Also, I cannot forget my lecturers and the entire faculty members of the School of Communication and Media Studies who have contributed immensely to my progress as a communicator. I am indebted to Mr. Anthony Sasu of ATL FM, Cape Coast, Public Relations Unit of Prisons Headquarters, Regional Commander and OIC Kumasi Central Prison and staff of Kumasi Central Prison who graciously participated in the survey.

Finally, I am grateful to all my brothers and sisters, friends and colleagues, who helped me in diverse ways to complete this programme successfully.



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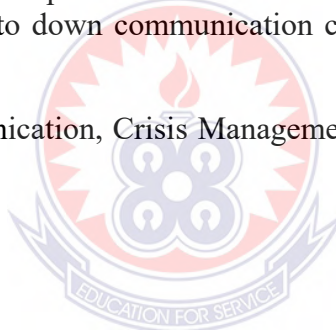
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ABSTRACT

The 2-day riot at the Kumasi Central Prison which took place on February 4, 2015 was considered one of the biggest riots recorded in the Ghana Prison Service history. This study sought to examine how communication during and after the riot was handled. The objectives of the study were to identify the role communication plays during the various stages of crisis management at the Ghana Prison Service (GPS) and also examine the factors that affected the implementation of effective communication in crisis management at the Ghana Prison Services. Using the Situational Crisis Communication Theory as the framework for this qualitative case study, the findings revealed that during the riots, officers were given certain guidelines to follow in terms of communicating with the media and their publics. The study found that during and after crisis at the GPS, the T.A.P (Truth, Assessment and Poise) method was employed in dealing with the situation especially when dealing with the media. Again, it was found that during the riot, measures such as facility shut down, intelligence briefing, press releases, setting up investigative committee were some of the mechanisms employed by the crisis management team. The study concluded that fear and uncertainty, contradicting messages and inadequate resources were crucial challenges in crisis communication in the Ghana Prison Service. The study recommended that management of the Ghana Prisons Service should communicate and sensitize its stakeholders on matters related to crisis management and also develop a communication manual for the Service and the bureaucratic nature of top-to down communication channels be critically examined to avoid media speculations.

Keywords: Crisis Communication, Crisis Management, Ghana Prisons Service, Public Relations Officer, Riot



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0. Background to the study

The principle behind the operation of prisons by a modern state is not only custody for criminals who constitute a security threat to the state but also reformatory for them (Babajide, Saheed & Ashindorbe, 2019). Without any doubt, prisons in most African countries have been described to be in crisis and not many studies have been conducted to investigate prison systems in African countries (Stephens, 2018). In today's society, crisis communication and facility management should go hand in hand. With numerous different events at a facility, a crisis is a certainty, and the communication used in conjunction with that event is essential (Pheng, Ho, & Ann, 1997).

All organizations face the risk of encountering a crisis, and the way in which an organization handles said crisis determines its future reputation and success. Fearn-Banks (2017) defines crisis as a major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting the organization, company, or industry, as well as its publics, products, services, or good name. Crises, according to Fearn-Banks (2017), can occur in any and all organizations regardless of size; however, colleges and universities are very susceptible to crises, especially at larger institutions. In stressful situations, people desperately seek answers and often believe the first piece of information thrown at them, regardless of what the information is and where it is coming from (Neba & Nyuidzewira, 2021). Public opinion may become truth before facts and sources are checked. According to Fearn-Banks (2017), an organization in crisis must prove to its publics and often to the general public, that the prevailing negative opinion is not factual. In regards to public opinion, public relations' goal is to reinforce positive

attitudes, change negative attitudes, and provide information in a way that causes the less informed and neutrals to form the opinion most conducive to the organization's function (Fearn-Banks, 2017). In order to direct a public's opinion in a positive direction, public relations officials must handle a crisis with immediacy.

Coombs (2000) posits that there is no organization that can boost immunity to a crisis and that crisis can spring from within its confines or outside the organization. Reynolds (2006) explains that once crisis happens, people's lives may be endangered and the standing of a company or institution be exposed. According to Heath (2006) in order to explain crisis, one must first describe danger. The term crisis originates from the Greek word 'krisis' which when translated has a similar meaning as the English word 'choice' or 'decision' (Paraskevas, 2006). A crisis is portrayed as any danger or emergency situation that disturbs and destabilises a complex system while affecting an individual, a group, an organization or society altogether (Paraskevas, 2006; Coombs, 2000; Heath, 2006; Reynolds, 2006). It emerges without any notice and creates a sensation of uncertainty and fear among the affected ones (Sariannidis, et al., 2019). It is vital for those in charge of communication processes to recognise the early signals of a crisis and to inform the predisposed population and stakeholders about it. When a crisis is detected, actors must quickly act and make swift difficult choices or decisions (Mitroff 2000). When crises occur, especially without warning, they have negative impacts on society, environment, political structures, economy or (national) security. A crisis event denotes a state of chaos in the apparently regular evolution of a system. Crises are phases of transitions in which the usual ways of functioning do not work anymore (Boin, Overdijk & Kuipers 2013). The majority of people perceive these transitions as an urgent threat that policymakers must address urgently in times of

significant uncertainty. Therefore, the three main components that make up a crisis are threat, urgency and uncertainty (Boin et al., 2013).

When an organization faces a crisis, its reputation is likely to be at risk and although a crisis might be unpredictable, a crisis is not unexpected considering the array of pressures an organization is faced with in today's society. Organizational crises are a dynamic process involving three stages: pre-crisis, crisis-event, and post-crisis (Coombs, 2015). The pre-crisis stage is critical to building the reputation of an organization through everyday practices and normal operations. In the pre-crisis stage, an organization should be aware of its predisposing variables that might impact crisis preparedness, crisis prevention, and crisis detection (Coombs, 2015). Special consideration should be given to the pre-crisis stage to enable crisis communicators to utilize appropriate crisis response strategies should a crisis arise (Björck, 2016). A crisis can be local or international, economic or cultural and natural or human-made. Consequently, typologies have been developed using the three critical elements of a crisis mentioned above, in order to understand how they differ and how they pose different challenges in managing them (Boin et al., 2013). When looking at the threat element of a crisis, first, a distinction can be made of what it will impact. At the post crisis stage, Richardson (1994) examines that rebuilding stakeholder trust in the organization is one of the most important actions to conduct in crisis management. The author contends that crisis situations have a significant propensity to undermine stakeholder trust, loyalty, and appeal. Thus, after the crisis has passed, efforts must be made to rebuild any lost trust, loyalty, or confidence (Richardson, 1994). Coombs (2007a), on the other side, contends that this stage is primarily a recovery stage, with recovery for organizations taking one of two forms.

A crisis can endanger the health and safety of people, but it can also be related to the performance of a public institution or organization which threatens their legitimacy. According to Boin, Stern and Sundelius (2016), when examining a crisis as to the perceived level of urgency given to a threat, a differentiation can be made regarding the number of people that agree that a problem needs a quick resolution, the more people give salience to the issue the higher the crisis level. Finally, crises can be distinguished by the level of uncertainty. The difference can be made between regular events and unique events (Boin, Stern & Sundelius, 2016). Coombs (2010) supports that most crises can be categorized into different types, even though no crisis is exactly the same. These broad types help establish criteria for certain crisis situations. Coombs (2010) argues that there are nine different categories including natural disasters, malevolence, technical breakdowns, human breakdowns, challenges, mega-damage, organizational misdeeds, workplace violence and rumors.

Accurate information about how both internal and external customers perceive the communication climate is vital. Illusions, hopes and pretence have to give way to an appraisal of reality (Hargie & Tourish, 2000). Public relations have become popular among prisons in the developing countries (Grunig, 2010). Although the concept is not practiced in most prisons (Repper, 2009), its practice involves planning and evaluating public relations initiatives that should realize organizational goals (Mulinge, 2016). According to Covey (2006), today's debate of strategic public relations is dominated by references to the idea that public relations should be planned, managed according to objectives, appraised, and linked to corporate goals. An organization's reputation, profitability, and continued existence may all be dependent on the degree to which its target audience supports its goals and policies. Public relations specialists, to Barney and Hansen (1994), function as advocates for clients who are attempting to create and

maintain good ties with the public. As managers become more aware of the connection between good public relations and organizational performance, they are increasingly seeking communication strategy and policy advice from public relations specialists (Watson & Noble, 2007). Public relations practitioners, according to Watson and Noble (2005), are in charge of organizational functions such as media relations, community, consumer, and industry relations, governmental relations, political campaigns, interest-group representation, conflict resolution, and employee investor relations.

Prisons in poor nations have embraced public relations (Grunig, 2010). Although the concept is not employed in the vast majority of jails, it is in those that do (Stabley, 2021). It comprises creating and assessing public relations initiatives that are in line with its mission of reforms (Appiah, Dankwah & Dravie, 2018). Maximum-security prisons in Europe, for example, have embraced public relations as a strategy of enhancing their public relations with the wider public by acting as a crucial link to the outside world (UNDOC, 2019). As a functional approach, public relations have provided focus and direction for an organization's contacts with stakeholders, developing symbolic and behavioral linkages with a wide range of stakeholders (Holladay & Tachkova, 2021). In the great majority of European public institutions, it is the logic and reasoning that drives the public relations job (Holladay & Tachkova, 2021). This serves not only as a communication plan, but also as a framework for adopting communication methods necessary to enhance an organization's performance (Charles & Marschan-Piekkari 2002).

Today's challenge for the Ghana Prison Service (GPS), like any other security agency, stems from the requirement to serve the public good. The GPS is one of several agencies that fall under the purview of the Ministry of Interior and performs several important functions as specified in the 1972 Prisons Service Decree, NRCD 46 (Ghana

Prison Service, 2015). Safe custody and welfare of prisoners remain the core functions of the service, while reformation and rehabilitation are the noncore functions. The GPS also performs other functions such as participating in national ceremony parades and United Nations peacekeeping assignments (Ghana Prison Service, 2015). The number of prisons that operate throughout the country has progressively increased over the years. In 1948, there were a total of 29 prison facilities across Ghana. However, this number had significantly increased to 45 by 2013 (Ghana Prison Service, 2015). Collectively, these prison establishments house about 14,600 inmates, which is about 32% more than the authorized capacity. Also, the Ghana Prison Service faces problems with personnel commitment and misconduct. In 2013, the total number of personnel was 5,898, comprising 4,029 males and 1,869 females (Ghana Prison Service, 2015).

Narratives about prison treatment are important, especially considering that incarcerated people have inside knowledge about prison life and the social circumstances resulting in the loss of freedom (UNDOC, 2019). Incarcerated people are also likely the best providers of prison accountability (Drucker, 2011). Irregular growth in national incarceration rates is not completely explained by increases in crime rates (Drucker, 2011). The problems of overcrowding are not only unconstitutional in many instances, but are also unsanitary, dangerous, and even deadly (Davis, 2003). The rise in prison populations has increased problematic conditions within the Ghana prison walls necessitating public access to prisoners' unfettered perspective about prison life (Parisi, 2020). Crowded facilities are also less safe because the supervisory capacity of staff is impaired, resulting in chaotic prison environments and less opportunities for prisoners to remain in contact with the outside world (Salins & Simpson, 2017).

1.1.1. The 4th February 2015 riot case at the Kumasi Central Prison

The 2-day riot at the Kumasi Central Prison took place on February 4, 2015. According to the Management of GPS, it was one of the biggest riots to be recorded in the Ghana Prison Service history. The riot started when several inmates overpowered some guards on duty as a result of prisoner grievances (Frimpong & Baah, 2015). The prisoners had been making their grievances known for a number of times and on 4th February, they took advantage of a fire situation and held the guards. This resulted in the destruction of properties. The fire was eventually put out by personnel of the Ghana National Fire Service, however the prisoners refused to return to their holding areas and instead started picketing, confronting wardens to be allowed out (Frimpong & Baah, 2015). According the Frimpong and Baah (2015), the situation worsened when the inmates got access to the warehouse, where they retrieved tools such as pickaxes, cutlasses, cooking utensils, plastic chairs etc., which aided them to fight back the security personnel. As part of moves by the security officers to take back control of the yard, several warning shots were fired, as well as tear gas and hot water before they could take control of these desperate inmates. A remand inmate who attempted to snatch a rifle off a police officer was shot by another officer who was looking on which led to his death. A number of officers were injured in the confrontation (Daily Graphic, 2015). The prison authorities tried to negotiate with the inmates but when this failed, they used force to retake back the prison. This however because a crisis situation when police reinforcements along with a number of soldiers had to be called in to remedy the situation Frimpong & Baah, 2015). Things escalated with the police firing warning shots and volleys of teargas into the Prison yard to scare the prisoners from further causing any harm (Report on Kumasi Central Prison Riot, 2015).

1.1.2. Prison riots and communication

Prison riots have long been recognised as persistent and pervasive problems in many societies across the globe (Proust & Saldaña, 2022). Riots have been tested against inhumane conditions, bad food, brutal staff, economic factors, racial tensions, incarceration rates, political dis-empowerment, the presence of young violent prisoners, external social upheavals, building-design problems and overcrowding (Boin & Rattray, 2014). Several reasons have been advanced for all or each of these disturbances. What seems most likely is that there has been no one identifiable cause. There have been a series of contributory factors, one or more of which may have applied in each incident (Adams, 2014). There are, of course, many structural factors that routinely threaten the ‘way things work’ in a prison. For example, prisons are tasked with what staff can perceive as conflicting and competing goals (retribution, deterrence and rehabilitation) the result of which can be confusion, leading to role ambiguity and role conflict (Boin, 2001). Prison organizations generally suffer from tight budgets as they tend to lose out against organizations that are perceived to serve more popular and socially desirable goals and client populations (Hargrove & Glidewell, 1990). Leaders have to balance between an overriding concern with conserving the ‘way things have always been’ and a proclivity for change that upsets the precarious institutional balance within a prison (Eklin, 2015). This concept of leadership responsibility includes the policymaking levels of the prison system. Prisons are usually part of a central agency or department, which is responsible for policymaking, co-ordinating and oversight tasks (UNODOC, 2019). They are embedded in a larger institutional structure, which should facilitate safety-enhancing processes at the organizational level. Boin and Rattray (2014) state that prison riots happen for many different reasons and their true cause is not always as obvious as the immediate cause of reaction. This means that while a prison riot may

appear to have been caused by a specific incident, such as the removal of a television, the tension that builds up to a riot condition may have started months earlier.

Communication entails the use and share of information done in an efficient way by collecting, comparing, analysing and soon after spreading it out instantly and in a handy form (Kapucu, 2006). When the present situation of a community and the operations of cooperating institutions are communicated, it grants the responding actors the capability to make sound decisions on how to act simultaneously with other institutions in the network to achieve the primary goals (Kapucu, 2006). Ogrizek and Guillery (1999) suggest crisis communication consists basically of a set of concepts, principles, analysis and working methods that apply specially to the very particular situation known as crisis. Coombs and Holladay (2005) offer that a crisis event can be a threat to an organization. Doorley & Garcia (2007) argue that new communication technologies have influence on internal and external communication especially in times of crisis.

Coombs (2007) argues that people directly involved in a crisis are increasingly experiencing trauma as a result of the sharing of news on the internet and other media. According to Doorley & Garcia (2007), new technologies have undoubtedly affected how crisis communication is conducted internally and externally. Publics today are empowered with text messaging, blogging, tweets, and cell phone cameras and videos to share their voices instantaneously during a crisis. Considering that the emotions of internal publics are likely to be influenced when an organization experiences a crisis, crisis communicators should look at how to effectively communicate with their internal audience (Narverud, 2016). Despite the importance in understanding communication with internal publics, internal crisis communication is an under researched area (Johansen, Aggerholm, & Frandsen, 2012). According to Stavre (2001), a public

relations approach need not imply a firm and complicated strategy, quite the opposite, it is likened to a channel, inside a lively framework of maturity and in the absence of apprehension and its inevitability is aimed at offering precision and effectiveness.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Bernstein (2013) stated that no organization is immune to crises. Therefore, the importance of efficient crisis communication cannot be downplayed as it assists organizations in tackling the crisis that has the probability of bringing, a lot of harm to the organization's image and reputation hence overall business performance (Fern-Banks, 2007). Bernstein (2013) further posits if any institution does not prepare, it will incur more damage. According to Bernstein (2013), the slower the response, the more damage is incurred, hence the need for crisis preparedness, response and effective communication. Awareness of the perceptions of organization publics is essential to the success of an organization, especially for the success of an organization experiencing a crisis when an organization's reputation is likely to be at risk (Frandsen & Johansen, 2011).

Deficient communication designs, as incoherent information flows, hinder inter-organizational coordination and communication (Drăgan Bogdan, 2019). During a crisis, stress and time pressure disrupt actors in their search for information while the volume of information that must stream through current channels dramatically increases (Hale, Dulek & Hale, 2005). The increase of information is due to the number of coinciding events; the complexity of the crisis; and the importance of rapid and precise information of the occurring events (Hale et al., 2015). In crises that arose as a result of the destructive activities of organizations, scholars consistently applied crisis communication as a form of reputational management to diminish the impact of the organization's unsavory deeds (Gonzalez-Herrero, & Smith, 2010).

According to Amnesty International (2021), Ghanaian Prisons is a place where human rights are systematically violated. The management of the prisons is in the exclusive list, being the sole affair of the government. The penal principles establishing the prisons therefore remain an uncontrollable variable that determine its administration and governance. This in turn results in inequality on the status of the incarcerated (Brown & Duguid, 2000). The Prisons Service is largely skewed towards the reformation of criminals and not perse punishment. However, due to the nature of those incarcerated, many do not heed to the reformation processes but rather tend to corrupt some of the inmates to run riot and become ring leaders in the prisons (Madoka, 2014). Maximum prisons are particularly notorious for all manner of human rights abuse of prisoners (Adar & Munyae, 2001). This has given the prison service a dented image and the prison officers are viewed negatively by the public. The Kumasi Central Prison riot incident in 2015 is an example of a case where excessive force was used. The incident led to a prisoner losing the life and several having life-long injuries. Many were those who demanded the persecution of the officers involved since they did not act on intel they received before the riot (Committee Report, 2015).

Given previous study results suggesting different connections to an organization, it is assumed that crisis response strategies should be strategically chosen based on the given public (i.e., using different response strategies when communicating with external publics versus internal publics) (Frandsen & Johansen, 2011). A study conducted by Johansen, Aggerholm and Frandsen (2012) revealed that there is a lack of research on the perception and responses of internal publics on crisis response strategies. Bundy, Pfarrer, Short and Coombs (2017) assert that research in this space remains fragmented, making it difficult for scholars to understand the literature's core conclusions, recognize unsolved problems, and navigate paths forward. Butler (2021)

stated that impacted publics might have higher levels of empathy for organizational realities than previously understood that reframes culpability as responsibility for the plight of your publics, not necessarily immediate outright responsibility for the crisis. This offers insights for a practical approach to crisis communication that is inclusive of publics, yet still fair to the organization that has to also represent its own interests.

Lando (2014) states that a crisis is inevitable to any organization or individual, anywhere and at any time. This is asserted by Argenti (2017) posits that crises are unpredictable, and as such it is therefore not a matter of if, but when, it will occur. Fearn-Banks (2007) on the other hand states that crisis management provides the organization a better chance to gain control of its situation since it provides a guide to managing crises. Kinyanjui & Juma (2014), assert that planned approaches enhance service delivery and the ability of agencies to attain their goal. Strategic plans therefore must bear in mind these difficult tasks and respond to them appropriately. Therefore, the Service is compelled to design a new strategic path driven by a joint vision, while considering the importance of its global positioning (Amnesty International, 2009). This is the key component that can propel the Service's strategic communication plan.

Boz and Küçükaltan (2013) qualitatively studied six big companies from different sectors in Turkey using a case study approach. The study's goal was to analyse and compare the crisis preparedness system, crisis experience and characteristics of the organizations. Findings were that companies are better prepared when they have crisis preparedness plans. Fowler, Kling and Larson (2006) did a quantitative study of organizational preparedness for coping with major disaster. The study was to ascertain the readiness of organizations to successfully survive a serious potential crisis or disaster in their workplace in South-Western United States. One finding of the study was that top and middle level managers had a higher perception of preparedness than

their employees. Similar to findings from Fowler et al. (2006) study, Promsri (2014) discovered that top management had higher perception of crisis preparedness than the employees. Again, there was no relationship between work experience and employees' perception in response to crisis. Also, Selart, Johansen and Nesse (2012) investigated how crisis preventive plans control employees' reaction to risk situations and welfare. The assumption was that leadership crisis preparation would lead to lower perceived risk among the employees and it would also lead to a higher degree of well-being.

Twum (2013) surveyed employees of Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited to identify the employees' preference of the organization's internal communication channels and whether the employees preferred the organization to introduce new channels which were not in use. Mukii (2016) conducted a study on the role of communication in higher learning institution during crisis management found out that 96% of the respondents agreed that a communication policy is an important document as it provides guidelines to the stakeholders on what the institutions expectations are about communication issues. A study conducted by Bakhda (2011) on the importance of communication in learning institutions found that open sharing of information is key in helping managers relax any tensions between students and management. Tandoh (2021) in a study found that key communication approaches by organizations was stakeholder engagement and mass media campaigns with over 80% of their communication objectives and also the ultimate outcome of the communication strategy was to effect behavioural change. However, little research has been done in the fields of rioting and crisis in the prison service. Much attention has been on recidivism (e.g.: Dennison, 2013; McKiernan, Shamblen, Collins, Strader, & Kokoski, 2013; Prince & Butters, 2013; Purvis, 2013; Mnguni & Mohapi, 2015)

However, without any doubt, prisons in most countries have been described to be in crisis and not many studies have been conducted to investigate the prison systems (e.g.: Jacobson, Heard and Fair, 2017; Sarkin, 2008; Collier, 2014). To address crisis at the Ghana prisons Service, several plans have been formulated including the implementation of a 10-year strategic plan which details what to be done at a particular time (GPS Strategic Plan, 2015). The Ghana Prison Service's Strategic Plan presumes that change is necessary and as such a legitimate worry to all stakeholders, and that the affected parties need to look at appropriate channels that can be explored, as well as the institution providing an enabling environment for staff to work as a team for the common good of the institution (GPS, 2015). This is what needs to be taken into consideration while preparing the institution's crisis management and communication plan.

Crisis management, put plainly, is managing the ongoing situation. For any management team dealing with a crisis, the first and primary measure is to save lives, while the second measure is damage control, and the third measure is to prevent further incidents (Civelek et al., 2016). The riot that occurred at the Kumasi Central Prison had the various stages of a crisis but the authorities were oblivious of it and it escalated. As in any relationship, communication is crucial this is according to Wamae (2011). Therefore, the need to keep the channels of communication open and accessible with the institution's publics cannot be overemphasized. A relationship can only stay alive if the parties involved maintain an open line of communication. There is need therefore, for prison institutions to embrace crisis management communication plans. Many scholars (e.g.: Boz and Küçükaltan, 2013; Fowler, Kling and Larson, 2006; Promsri, 2014; Ampofo-Bekoe, 2014; Twum, 2013) agree on the importance of a crisis communication plan and strategy; however, they do not look at the critical role effective

communication plays in crisis management and execution of the same as it involves the message type, timing of the message, clarity, precision and understanding each other. The message communicated during a crisis episode should and must be clearly understood in order for the right cause of action to be taken (Twum, 2013). It is vital therefore, to underscore the need for a communication policy as a reference tool for effective implementation of a crisis communication plan. It is also noteworthy, that a communication policy provides a basis on how best to execute a communication plan during crises. Riots in prisons have become a phenomenon that has more or less becomes part and parcel of issues of great concern in the administration of justice, prisons management and national security (Promsri, 2014; Ampofo-Bekoe, 2014). However, the manner with which communication on such situations remain scanty and this leads to speculations. Hence, the reason for undertaking this qualitative study was that little to no study has been conducted in Ghana to find out how the Prison Service reacts to crisis and using the communication tools available.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The general objective of the research study is to assess crisis communication in the Ghana Prisons Service with a focus on the Kumasi Central Prison Riots. Thus, the research aims to:

1. Explore the role communication played during the various stages of the riot in Kumasi Central Prison?
2. Examine the implementation mechanisms of communication used in crisis management process during the riot in Kumasi Central Prison
3. Assess the challenges that affect the implementation of a crisis communication plan in the Service.

1.4. Research Questions

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the research will seek to answer the following specific questions:

1. What crisis communication strategies were employed during various stages of the riot in Kumasi Central Prison?
2. What effective implementation mechanisms of communication in crisis management process were used during the riot in Kumasi Central Prison?
3. What are the challenges that affected the effective implementation of a crisis communication plan in Kumasi Central Prison during the riot?

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study therefore, seeks to determine how the role of strategic communication can greatly impact on the image and reputation of any institution during crises. It further finds out if the stakeholders of Ghana Prison Service are aware as to whether or not there exists a crisis communication plan and if so, what the impact has been to-date; if not what it entails to come up with a crisis communication plan as the absence of both can impact negatively on any one institution. At the same time, the study will examine what challenges exist that mar crisis communication from being effective in institutions as well as strive to identify the various types of crises the institution has experienced, how the Service has handled them, and also establish the role crisis communication played during those moments. Further, the study will explore how the media was handled and further interrogate the opinions and perceptions of the employees, students, media and stakeholders. The findings of this study will be useful to both its internal and external stakeholders in understanding the role communication plays in crisis, how, who and when to mitigate a crisis situation. This study will also

contribute to the body of literature available in the field of crisis communication and prison services.

1.6. Delimitations of the Study

The scope of the study was limited to the role of crisis communication during the stages of the riot at the Kumasi Central Prison of the Ghana Prison Service. The study focused on only senior ranking officers of the Prison Service and Heads at the Kumasi Central Prison.

1.7. Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One provides an overview of the background to the study which served as the basis for the entire study. This is followed by the statement of the problem and objectives addressed as well as purpose of the study, and research questions and hypotheses answered and tested. The chapter is concluded with the significance and delimitation of the study.

Chapter Two focuses on the review of related literature. It discussed comprehensively, conceptual review basically on the concept of crisis communication, types of crisis, crisis phases, crisis management, prisons in crises, communication in crisis management, crisis spokesperson, sensemaking, response and systems and the role of social media in crisis communication. Empirical studies were also reviewed on crisis communication and a conceptual framework was developed based on the reviewed literature.

Chapter Three talks about the methodology highlighting the research design that was utilised to execute the research. It also looked at sampling procedures, instrument for data collection, and the tools for analysis of data. Chapter Four reports on the results stemming from the analysis of the data obtained from the field work. This is

complemented by discussion of the results referring to studies that support the findings of the current study.

Chapter Five focuses on the summary of the study, key findings, conclusions, recommendations, and implication for counselling. It ends with suggested areas for further research.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. Introduction

This chapter presents a review of related literature on the effective role of communication during crises in the Ghana Prison Service. The literature review presents an empirical review and a conceptual framework.

2.1. The concept of crisis communication

A variety of definitions have been applied to the concept of a crisis, and many scholars have developed working definitions for their own purposes. In early crisis management literature, definitions focused on a crisis as a disruption that could threaten a system, or organization, both on the physical and existential level (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992). Crises have been labeled as forewarning situations that can escalate in severity and may impede operations and affect revenues (Fink, 1986). Coombs (2018) stated that crisis communication refers to communications reserved for serious events that require careful attention from management. Argenti (2002) suggests that crisis management is organization-centered and starts with an analysis of the company and/or industry and moves towards asking whether a plan or preparation is needed. In contrast, audience-centered approaches suggest that stakeholders should be a top priority, a level of responsibility should be accepted, central information centers should be developed, news coverage should be monitored and key stakeholders should be communicated with (Wilcox, Cameron, Ault, & Agee, 2005).

Often, institutions have a determined contingency plan that is put into place when a tragedy strikes. This initiates a form of communication that is intended to communicate the message of the company to the public in a way that controls the story, but still admits the truth of the situation. Usually, crisis communication is used in

situations where there are social, political or natural disasters. Heath and O’Hair (2015) discuss the rapid growth of crisis communication. They add to crisis communication’s definition that a crisis is frequently seen in the academic writings to be a perception of events rather than the events themselves; what determines whether something is a crisis differs from person to person and the overarching perception of a crisis can ultimately affect the outcome of the events that occurred (Heath & O’Hair, 2015). This point complicates the definition of crisis communication. If what Heath and O’Hair (2015) suggest is correct, it is impossible to settle on a single definition of crisis communication, because the crisis is perceived differently by each person involved.

In other words, does a situation constitute crisis communication if it is perceived by only one person as a crisis? What about two people? Heath and O’Hair’s (2015) theory complicates the definition of crisis communication. In contrast, Coombs and Holladay (2010) asserts that a crisis occurs when someone, most notably stakeholders, perceives an event that was not predictable as a threat to important assets. This crisis may be a health, safety, environmental, or economic issue and can seriously impact an organization’s performance and generate negative outcomes. This definition is more workable with the macro-level crises businesses experience.

Though some people may not perceive an event as a crisis for an organization, due to their situational presuppositions, the large scale economic, political and social impact the event has on the organization defines it as crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2010). While Coombs and Holladay do agree with Heath and O’Hair (2015) that a crisis is perceptual, he goes a step further in suggesting that it is the perception of the stakeholder that determines whether the event is, in fact, a crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2010). While certain people in the public may not consider an event a crisis, if it affects

the stakeholders in a noteworthy manner, then it is a crisis. The communication process and channels are then selected by evaluating the event and its impact.

In recent years, public relations scholars have started looking at crisis management from a public relations and reputation management perspective (Hagan, 2007). Within that time frame, communication scholars have also started to look at crisis management as a symbolic approach (Coombs, 1998). This perspective places an emphasis on “how communication can be used as a symbolic resource in attempts to protect the organization’s image” (Coombs, 1998, p. 177), which is consistent with Stocker’s (1997) second crisis management objective, managing or countering the negative effects of a crisis. The symbolic approach rests on two assumptions: 1) crises present a threat to organizational image, and 2) the characteristics of a crisis situation influence the communicative choices of an organization (Coombs, 1998). Crisis communication research has focused on strategies for concepts such as image protection and restoration (Benoit, 1997), contingency theories (Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, & Mitrook, 1997), and situational response strategies (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). A common criticism of the symbolic approach is that the literature is rife with case studies that offer more post-crisis situation prescriptive recommendations than predictive theories (Coombs, 2007; Hagan, 2007). Although these rhetorical case studies have allowed communicators to focus on what to say or do based on given situations, it has also meant that overall theory has remained relatively underdeveloped (Coombs, 2007).

2.2. Types of crisis

Organizational crises may take many forms. Ulmer, Sellnow and Seeger (2007) identify crisis types into two categories: *intentionally* caused crises, which include terrorism, sabotage, workplace violence, poor employee relationships, poor risk

management, hostile takeovers and unethical leadership; and *unintentionally* caused crises, which mainly consist of natural disasters, disease outbreaks, unforeseeable technical interactions, product failure and downturns in economy. Compared to the rest of crisis types, socio-technical crisis produces one of the most prominent and urgent forms of crises (Shrivastava, 1993; Shrivastava, Mitroff, Miller, & Miglani, 1988).

Technical Crises: Technical crises, such as oil spills, are becoming important because of their increased frequency, the extensive damage they cause to human life and environment, and their large cost to organizations and society. Media attention and the contagious effect of a crisis, where the negative publicity impacts not only the company that is suffering from a crisis, but also “infects” other companies in the same industry (Dahlen & Lange, 2006). A large number of prison systems around the world are at a stage of crisis, the serious effects of which harm prisoners, their families and societies as a whole. The reality in many prisons tends to be not only far from international standards, but also risks undermining the ultimate purpose of a sentence of imprisonment: the protection of society from crime. While the nature of the prison crisis is multidimensional, it manifests itself in the following ways:

Continuing growth of prison populations and prison overcrowding: It is estimated that more than 10.2 million people were held in penal institutions worldwide in 2013, with an average imprisonment rate of 144 prisoners per 100,000 of the world population. In the same year, 114 national prison administrations operated on the basis of an occupancy level of over 100 per cent. Imprisonment disproportionately affects people living in poverty and imprisoning large segments of society places a significant burden on State budgets. Despite regional differences, prison overcrowding has developed into an acute global challenge, and poses a major obstacle for the implementation of the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. When

penitentiary systems are overstretched and poorly managed, prisons run the risk of degenerating into dangerous places for both prisoners and prison staff and can even turn into “crime schools” and fertile breeding grounds for radicalization (UNODC, 2018).

Prisons have since evolved from that of mere safe custody of prisoners, to that based on the separate system of solitary confinement, of penal labour, and meagre diet (Gold Coast Prison Ordinance, 1876; Prison Regulation, 1860). It further changed to that of trade training in 1920 but which was never fully implemented (Seidman, 1969). Ghana’s penal system as it was under British colonial rule has remained virtually unchanged in terms of its paramilitary structure of administration, its emphasis on security and discipline in its operations, and the maintenance of a policy of safe custody of prisoners and trade training when practicable (Republic of Ghana, *Prison Service Decree*, 1972). The prison service suffers a very low public reputation due to occasional prison officer misconducts published in the media, and its interior (poor prison conditions) and previous exterior (lack of justification and moral consent) legitimacy issues. The Ghana prisons service (GPS) has not been able to keep pace with modern trends in offender management (e.g., offender rehabilitation programs). Seidman’s (1969, p. 431) comment that the Ghana penal system “stands as monument to colonial rule, as a memorial to confused goals, conflicting objectives, policies evolved and abandoned, and sometimes, no policies at all” remains relevant today (Adjei et al., 2008; Akoensi, 2014; Ghana Prisons Service, 2010; Mendez, 2014).

2.3. Crisis Phases

According to Kruke (2012), there are three main phases for crisis development. These phases are the pre-crisis phase, acute crisis phase, and post-crisis phase and they are interconnected (Kruke, 2012).

Pre-crisis phase

First, the pre-crisis phase includes some main activities such as prevention and preparedness. Prevention is about constructing robust communities, organizations, infrastructure, technological systems, industries, risk reduction, et cetera (Kruke, 2015). In the view of Perry & Lindell (2003), risk reductions are actions necessary to decrease the detected or projected levels of danger and identify the resources required for implementing those actions. Therefore, risk reduction in the broad sense includes developing and implementing activities to mitigate, prepared, respond, and recover (Mileti, 1999). With all the risk reduction approaches, Aven and Renn (2010) have argued that there are some risks that we cannot prevent from occurring since such risks are unavoidable. Thus, prevention could be easier said than done. In the view of Aven and Renn, there could be residual risks that persist after our preventive measures. Because of that, there is the need to prepare for such residual risks and other unexpected events or surprises (Aven & Renn, 2010). Taleb (2007) coined the term “black swans” to describe such unexpected events. Therefore, Kruke (2015) has argued that preparedness should be about handling events that cannot be prevented. Accordingly, crisis preparedness is about readiness to respond to a crisis event and typically involves technical, operational, and organizational measures, such as planning, training, and resource allocation (Kruke, 2015). Some scholars, such as Mileti (1999), have linked crisis preparedness to the ability to anticipate problems. Anticipation may be defined as predicting and preventing potential dangers before damage is done (Wildavsky, 1991). Therefore, through the anticipation of future problems, innovative means could be developed to address the problems effectively. Hence, through anticipation, a clear connection is created between preventive and preparedness activities in the pre-crisis phase and the ability to respond to the crisis in the acute phase.

Acute crisis phase

The acute phase, consists of implementing the plan, testing the knowledge and skills obtained during training sessions, and efficiently allocating resources to handle the crisis (Kruke, 2015). Accordingly, the planning and training at the pre-crisis phase must be put to use at the acute phase. However, there are cases where there is the need to deviate from the original plan as predicted in the pre-crisis phase since such plans would not work anymore. Kruke (2015) identified that there are moments such plans and training need to be changed because the crisis events may unexpectedly surprise us. Therefore, the crisis scenario may not fit entirely with the understanding obtained at the pre-crisis phase (Kruke, 2015). Usually, the main activities in the acute phase include searching and rescuing people by saving a life, protecting the environment from harm, protecting crucial assets, and finally, maintaining the reputation of organizations involved (Kruke, 2015).



Post-crisis phase

The post-crisis phase is the final phase. This phase focuses on recovering and learning activities. Returning into at least a stable condition is critical for crisis victims and responders (Kruke, 2015). Also, recovery activities include reconstruction and reorganization (Kruke, 2015). Learning activities include investigation and exploration of all learning opportunities from the relevance of the pre-crisis planning and training, the acute handling of the crisis, the reliability of response resources and equipment, and the appropriateness of the response structures (Kruke, 2015). Accordingly, the focus for such recovering and learning activities is to reach a new pre-crisis phase in a more robust condition than the previous pre-crisis phase, leading to the acute crisis.

2.4. Crisis management

Crisis management attempts to minimize damage while protecting as much of the organization's reputation as possible. According to Coombs (2010), crisis management was initially used in emergency scenarios, with four interrelated factors of crisis management drawn from those situations: prevention, preparation, response, and revision. Prevention is the crisis avoidance steps that the organization makes and also the act of heeding warning signs to avoid the crisis completely. Preparation is the most well-known step, as it includes examining crisis vulnerabilities, assembling a crisis management team and spokespersons, making a crisis portfolio, and launching a crisis communication system. Response is setting those elements into action, which often becomes a very public spectacle garnering media attention. Revision involves evaluating the response to make future crisis management more effective. To define his initial three macro stages of the crisis management process, Coombs (2010) built upon these principles and past crisis management frameworks, such as Fink's (1986) four-stage model, Mitroff's (1994) five-stage model, and the three-stage model recommended by numerous crisis management authors (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003).

Fink's model relates phases of a crisis to a disease, and categorizes them into four stages: the prodromal stage, the acute stage, the chronic stage, and the resolution stage. The prodromal stage is the warning stage, and the point where crisis managers attempt to identify a looming crisis. The acute stage occurs when the crisis actually happens, and its damage is usually a result of how well the crisis was managed in the prodromal stage. The chronic stage is the recovery phase where the lasting effects of the crisis are more fully seen. The resolution stage is the final phase or the clearly defined end of the crisis. Mitroff's (1994) five-stage model is composed of five stages: signal

detection, probing and prevention, damage containment, recovery, and learning. Signal detection and probing and prevention are the counterparts to Fink's prodromal stage, occurring when a company or organization recognizes the warning signs of a crisis. Additionally, damage containment aligns with Fink's acute stage, with recovery matching the chronic and resolution stages.

The additional stage of Mitroff's model that adds to Fink's four-stage model is the final learning stage where crisis managers evaluate the events of the crisis for future prevention of negative events. Not attributed to any particular scholar, the three-stage model was formed organically by many crisis management authors: "The three-stage model is not associated with any particular theorists, but it appears to have emerged from several research efforts as general analytical framework" (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003, p.97). Richardson (1994) provided the first defined set of the three-stage model components: precrisis or predisaster phase, crisis impact or rescue phase, and recovery or demise phase.

Kruke and Olsen (2012) have argued that flexibility and improvisation are key measures useful to meet the needs in a dynamic crisis environment. Flexibility and improvisation could lead to deviations from the prescribed rules and procedures. Such deviations may be essential for safe work practices, especially if the crisis is coupled with high uncertainty and uniqueness, where the standard of procedures is not useful (Klein, DiazGranados, Salas, Le, Burke, Lyons, & Goodwin, 2009). Consequently, people may not do what regulators expect them to do because they have discovered quicker, easier, and probably even more effective ways of adjusting to the crisis (Dekker & Suparamaniam, 2005). In the view of Klien et al. (2009), the deviation usually occurs since people find the formal standards, training tools, and methods more

cumbersome and irrelevant to work with. Thus, people depend on their experiences and intuitions when they find formal rules and irrelevant.

2.5. Causes of prison riots

There is increasing evidence that poor prison management is a significant factor in contributing to prison violence and at times even promoting individual and collective violent behavior (Homel & Thompson, 2005, p. 4). In a study by Dilulio in 1987 he distinguished three basic approaches towards prison management that is Control model where managers assume rigid administrative and formal restraints and control nearly all aspects of prison life. Emphasize is usually on inmate obedience, work, and education, in that order. Secondly is Responsibility model where managers argue that the maintenance of order should be pursued by as little as possible official control mechanism and creating maximum opportunities for prisoners to govern themselves and lastly Consensual model where prison managers incorporate features of both models. According to Dilulio's analysis, control and responsibility models differ in various dimensions as shown in the table below:

Table 1: Dilulio's control and responsibility models

Dimension	Control Model	Responsibility Model
Organization communication	Restricted channels of administrative system	More informal and takes place across different levels of authority
Nature of personnel relations	Relationship and forms of address between superiors and subordinates are formal	Forms of address more informal, colloquial
Nature and formality of prison staff	Prisoners are expected to address staff as "sir" and	Prisoners can address staff less formally and

communication	not be familiar with officials.	communication is less formal
Discretion exercised by staff	Officials enjoy very little discretion and must work "According to the book"	Officials are encouraged to use their discretion to get the best possible result
Regimentation of prisoners' life	Every aspect of prisoners' lives and daily routine is regimented into a routine	Inmates are afforded the greatest level of freedom consistent with security requirements
Reaction to prison rule reactions	Rule violations are met with strict punishments	Personnel do not react with formal sanctions for every rule violation
Response to prisoner disruptions	The typical response is "swift official counterforce"	More likely to negotiate with prisoners.
Prisoner participation in decision making	Inmates are assumed to be unable to self-govern	Efforts are made to give prisoners a greater voice in prison affairs

DiIulio's (1987) ethnographic case study of the Texas, California, and Michigan penal systems revealed that the control model of facility management (Texas) achieved the most orderly prisons he was also critical of the consensual model but Reisig undertook an empirical study and argued that "instead of restricting managerial decision making to a priori set of guiding principles, consensual model managers are more apt to remain flexible and to respond to dynamic conditions in and outside the immediate prison setting by modifying existing policies and practices within broad parameters (e.g., legal) as they attempt to discover „what works“". (Reisig, 1998, p. 230). In his study, Reisig also assessed whether the three models of management have an impact on the level of less serious and serious disorder in prisons and also tested Dilulio's conclusion that the control model was the most effective in reducing disorder. He

however came to a substantially different conclusion, finding that the incidence of serious disorder like riots was highest in prisons managed according to the control model, followed by the consensual model and lastly responsibility model managed prisons. He did, however, not find a significant difference in respect of less serious disorder.

The research also noted various management related factors contributing to violence and they include: security lapses, lack of prison officer discipline and morale, officers' inability or unwillingness to intervene in instances of victimization and violence, poor grievance and dispute resolution mechanisms, the formation of gangs and cliques, prisoners relying on violence or aggression for self-protection, deterrence and payback (Homel & Thompson, 2005, p. 5).

2.5.1. Overcrowding

Overcrowding is defined as a situation in which the number of people confined in prison is greater than the capacity of the prison to provide adequately for the physical and psychological needs of the confined persons. It is a feature of many systems of criminal justice throughout the world and can cause vital issues and concerns for “governments, communities, prisoners, and their families” (Griffiths, Murdoch & Phil, 2009). A recent report by Petteruti and Walsh (2008) on the impact of jail expansion and effective public safety strategies listed a variety of reasons for growing jail populations. Reasons included Changes in policing practices where a change in policing practices has led to an increase in arrests for low-level offenses, such as drug offenses (Petteruti & Walsh, 2008). Also, zero tolerance policies on quality-of-life crimes have led to more arrests for crimes such as loitering, Jails have become institutions for people with mental illnesses that is the closing of state mental health facilities

beginning in the 1960s have left people with fewer treatment options and many individuals now end up in the criminal justice system (Griffiths et al., 2009).

An analysis by Mullen and Smith (1980) also showed that by rigorously applying the cell standards recommended by the American Correctional Association (ACA), in March 1978 nearly two-thirds of all prisoners were confined to below-standard units i.e., units with less than 60 square feet per person. For example, in 1980, the federal case *Ruiz v. Estelle* declared the entire Texas prison system unconstitutional, partially because over one thousand inmates were sleeping on the floor of prisons this was already double the population size they were built to hold (Angelos & Jacobs, 1985). Another study on “influence of prison crowding on inmates’ perception of aggression” by Claire Lawrence, a psychology professor at the University of Nottingham in England showed that environmental conditions can influence how inmates interpret fellow prisoner’s behaviour. When individuals interpret others’ behavior as aggressive, whether intentional or unintentional, they are more likely to retaliate. According to Lawrence and Andrews (2004), those who are subjected to crowded conditions, and who lack a social support network, may become more prone to distress. That distress is linked to an increase in aggression.

Ekland and Olson (2010) in their study investigating large scale prison disturbances did not find support for overcrowding as the major cause of prison violence but rather found support for the theory that the mode of social control was the driving factor. Overcrowding has nonetheless been linked with a range of adverse outcomes for prisoners such as increased self-injury, heightened stress levels and perceptions of aggressive behavior in other prisoners, increased drug use, and higher levels in inter prisoner violence (Byrne & Hummer, 2008, p. 47). While overcrowding alone does not start prison riots, the tension that results from the strains caused by

overcrowding may lead to violence (Cobb, 1985). French & Gendreau (2006, p. 188) support this notion by stating that inmate perceptions of feeling overcrowded rather than actual spatial density would be a better predictor for misconduct.

Thus, the most likely conclusion is that over-crowding is not a causal factor in violence, but may possibly be considered a contributing factor, when correlated with other institutional variables, such as the managerial methods used to control or limit violence (Gaes, 1994; Ruback & Carr, 1993; Wortley, 2002).

2.5.2. The State of prisons

In the Woolf report, prison conditions are taken to mean more than the physical environment of prison establishments. They are the product of the physical environment of a prison and the ways in which that environment is used. A cell thirteen feet long by seven feet wide by thirteen feet high with no running water and small high barred windows is a poor physical environment for living. If prisoners have to share that environment "locked up for excessive periods of time" without access to integral sanitation, then, as the Woolf Report said of Strangeways prison, the conditions are "*of a wholly unacceptable standard*" (Woolf Reports, 1990). The Woolf Report recognised that poor prison conditions degrade both prisoners and staff. It further stated that although poor conditions are not the sole explanation of unrest, but when conditions and regimes both deteriorate, relations within prisons break down.

Riots are thus a symptom of that breakdown (Woolf report, 1990). But while there appears to be some support for the idea that poor conditions and deprivation provoke prison riots, Wilsnack (1976 p. 69), differed and stated that conditions alone cannot explain prison riots, Prisons with terrible conditions have remained free of riots, whereas riots have occurred in prisons in which conditions had been recently improved.

The prison is easily accessible, as it sits just off the connecting motorway with good rail and bus links. Significant thought went into ensuring that incident risk factors relating to conditions, overcrowding, and distance from home were minimized. Despite all these improvements, the prison had suffered four riots within its first five years, with staff hostages² taken and substantial damage done to the facilities. Clearly, other factors were at work. Poor prison conditions as the sole causal factor of prison riots must therefore be refuted (Aya, 1990).

Most prisons worldwide house prisoners in communal cells, this has often been blamed for violence and frustration amongst prisoners. Prisoners in communal cells are difficult to supervise adequately and the cell structure creates opportunities for prisoner-on-prisoner violence and prisoner-staff violence (Homel & Thompson, 2005, p. 5). The linear architectural design of most prisons is indicated by several authors as a factor that contributes to violence. The inherent design features of this architecture, in conjunction with the indirect staff supervision model that necessarily accompanies this kind of design, creates opportunities for both prisoner-prisoner and prisoner-staff violence (Zupan & Menke, 1991). Peguese & Koppel (2003, p. 82) state that in communal cells it is not only more difficult to identify prisoners responsible for violent and disorderly acts, but also difficult for staff to intervene when they are outnumbered by prisoners. Homel & Thompson therefore suggest the “New generation” prison design which promotes a podular design that limits unprotected spaces and enhances direct supervision. Results from prisons where these designs have been implemented are promising, but caution should be exercised in interpreting these results, as the architecture should be seen linked to the management practices, staff skills and other situational factors (Homel & Thompson, 2005). This design facilitates active supervision and engagement between prisoners and staff, and these has been associated

with lower levels of violence and disorder. Researchers warn, however, that successful implementation of this approach is heavily dependent on a commitment from management and the recruitment, selection, training and retention of appropriate prison personnel (Jay Farbstein et al., 1991; Zupan & Menke, 1991).

A report by the JALI Commission which focused on South Africa's correctional service was concerned that "in the Department of Correctional Services there is almost a culture of contempt for the administration of justice as prison officers consider themselves above the law" (JALI Commission, 2006, p. 349) this led to a culture of lawlessness. The JALI Commission's focus on this staff culture has been supported by various academic works including (Liebling, 2008) (Byrne & Hummer, 2008) (Liebling, 2004). Liebling in her works refers to culture as a shared set of assumptions, values, beliefs and attitudes expressed by officials, directly or indirectly and which shape their actions to a greater or lesser degree (Liebling, 2008, p. 106) this explains "different ways of doing things" at one prison which is different from another prison. For example, the attitude of officials who regard prisoners as "dangerous subjects" who need to be controlled and policed was formative of how prisoners are treated and it was found that these officials generally did not treat prisoners with respect (Liebling, 2008, p.117). The research by Liebling also demonstrated that the amount of power that officials have to exercise their duties was of lesser importance, but the way in which the power is used and how this is experienced ("how it feels") by prisoners are of critical importance (Liebling, 2008, p. 117). Prisoners often assert that officials play an active role in causing violence and disruption by provoking prisoners and behaving in a manner that would solicit an aggressive response (Goulding, 2007, p. 401).

Prisoners are usually grouped based on their profiles and various variables are used to group them. A distinction is made between external and internal classification;

the former determines where an inmate will be housed and the latter determines the cell where the inmate will sleep, the programs he or she is assigned to, risk of escape and level of control (Byrne & Hummer, 2008, p. 52). The variables used in classification vary for example in South Africa the DCS (department of correctional service) relied on three variables, namely sentence length, nature of the crime and number of previous convictions. The variables are however weak predictors of violent and disruptive behavior in prison and are rather extensions of the punitive component of the sentence imposed.

Using these variables, it then appears that a prisoner would be classified as, for example, maximum security not because of the potential management problems he or she may present through disruptive behavior, but rather because of the sentence imposed and the crime that was committed (Byrne & Pattavina, 2007). We can thus conclude that from a violence reduction perspective, the DCS classification system is then of little value. Byrne and Hummer also carried out an empirical study on classification in correctional systems in the U.S. Two separate studies were carried out and randomly selected prisoners in different security settings to that in which they had been classified: medium category prisoners were placed in minimum security and maximum-security prisoners were placed in medium security prisons. Neither of the studies found that there was an increase in misconduct, violence or disorderly behaviour (Byrne & Hummer, 2008, p. 52).

Therefore, two fundamental issues emerge from the debate on classification that is how to identify prisoners with a high risk for disruptive institutional behaviour at the internal classification stage; or which variables are used as objective and reliable predictors of violent and disruptive behavior and how to respond proactively to those prisoners identified with risk factors associated with violent and disruptive behavior

(Byrne & Hummer, 2008, p. 53). Byrne and hummer thus conclude that relevant variables in respect of violence prevention should be identified, although the following have been identified as known risk factors: age (young), gender (male), history of violence, history of mental illness, gang membership, low programme participation, and recent disciplinary action (Byrne & Hummer, 2008, p. 53). Following from this it is recommended by Byrne and Hummer (2008, p. 59) that a new generation of classification systems need to be tested which “link an inmates’ risk level to specific in-prison treatment programming. These new classification systems would be designed to focus on offender change, rather than offender control, as the outcome of the classification decisions.”

2.6. Prisons in crises

Problems within prisons often reflect wider societal problems, and this is particularly evident when a country is hit by a crisis. People in prison become even more dependent on the government to ensure their safety, health and wellbeing, and to provide for their basic needs. Crises rarely come in isolation, with conflict and extreme weather events creating prime breeding grounds for disease, environmental disasters leading to political instability and health crises exposing economic fragility. Unlike in the community, people in prison cannot evacuate their homes when conflict arises or natural disaster threatens. They cannot decide to flee if they are at risk of attack, and they have limited means to protect themselves against infectious diseases. In all crisis situations, the health and wellbeing of people in prison and staff must remain the priority, and human rights protection must be at the forefront of response plans. Disaster planning and emergency management requires an integrated approach with other agencies and should include crisis prevention, preparedness, response and

recovery. It should involve consultation with people in prison as well as staff. Effective responses require everyone to be alert, active and involved. Measures to mitigate the adverse impact of any crisis are important and must take account of any specific or disproportionate impact on particular groups of people in prison, including women, children and older persons.

Health crises

It is well known that prisons are high risk settings, prone to rapid outbreaks of infectious diseases such as Tuberculosis (TB), cholera, Ebola, and now COVID-19 (World bank, 2020). The specific nature of the population and environmental challenges posed by closed settings present many unique challenges in managing such outbreaks (Ogunsola & Mehtar, 2020). Past experience has shown that, national disease management strategies do not adequately address these specific challenges and often neglect prison populations (Ogunsola & Mehtar, 2020). TB, and particularly drug-resistant TB, remains a persistent problem in many prisons largely due to late diagnosis, inadequate treatment, overcrowding, poor ventilation and regular prison transfers (World Health Organization, 2018). People in prison also tend to come from population groups where TB infection and transmission are higher. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that the TB notification rate in prisons ranges from 11 to 81 times higher than in the general population (World Health Organization, 2018). In 2014-2016 the Ebola outbreak in West Africa was met with swift detection, early testing and rapid response in prisons (World Bank, 2020). In Liberia, authorities-initiated prison decongestion measures, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) supported the improvement of sanitation measures with prison authorities, resulting in no reported cases or deaths in prisons (World bank, 2020).

Similarly in Sierra Leone, there were no reported deaths among people in prison from Ebola, largely owing to timely coordinated action by the prison authorities and NGOs such as Advocaid. An observation and isolation centre were set up for newly arrived detainees, staff received training in the prevention of Ebola transmission, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and hand sanitiser were distributed to people in prison and staff (UNDP, 2015). A number of cholera outbreaks have affected prisons in recent years. Cholera transmission is closely linked to inadequate access to clean water and sanitation facilities and is often associated with humanitarian crises. A 2010 outbreak in Haiti infected at least 30 detained persons and 13 reportedly died from cholera (BBC, 2010). An outbreak at a prison in Kisumu, Kenya in July 2017 resulted in three deaths. It was reported that a breakdown of the water treatment plant had contributed to the outbreak (All Africa, 2017).

An outbreak in Yemen in 2016-2018, as a direct consequence of the ongoing conflict, also impacted prisons. PRI supported efforts to address the outbreak by supplying medicine to meet the treatment needs of 3,600 cases across five facilities, establishing two health clinics in prisons and medical isolation rooms for the treatment of infectious disease, and developing educational materials for people detained on how to prevent the spread of cholera through personal hygiene. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has exposed weaknesses in health systems around the world and the lack of preparedness, prevention and control mechanisms in place for a health emergency of this scale (Health in prisons, Global Prison Trends 2021). Because they are highly controlled environments, however, prisons can achieve infection prevention and control through systematic screening on arrival at prison, regular health monitoring of all people in prison and targeted controls on movement in and out of facilities.

The prison environment can also allow for identification of vulnerable individuals, early detection, rapid testing and contact tracing, as well as awareness raising and support initiatives, and vaccination and treatment programmes which can reach entire prison populations. The Irish Prison Service, for example, received praise for its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with its contact tracing system submitted to the WHO as a model of best practice. The Irish public health response was informed by previous experience of dealing with infectious diseases in prisons, and characterised by early planning, prevention and training in the use of PPE. The effective response was also owing to a clear recognition of the continuum between prison health and public health, and the benefits of collaboration between prisons and public health agencies (Clarke, Devlin, Conroy, Kelly, Sturup-Toft, 2020).

Overcrowding in prisons is a significant issue (Dako-Gyeke & Baffour, 2016). A prison in Ghana, built to accommodate 700 people, now houses approximately 4000 inmates, almost six times the number of people intended. All of the prisons in Ghana combined should house no more than 8000 people and currently they accommodate more than 14,000 inmates (Amnesty International, 2017). The challenges faced by the Ghana Prisons Service are no secret. In the 2009 report of the prison service, the Director General noted that "Nutrition of prisoners was of much concern..."and that "health care for officers and inmates remain another serious challenge for the Service (Ghana Prisons Service Annual Report, 2009). Some of the prison buildings are old and not suitable for habitation" and "The issue of remand prisoners is still of some concern since some trials are rather delayed" (Ghana National Report, Universal Periodic Review, 2012). Remand prisoners significantly contribute to the overcrowding of Ghana's prisons. Amnesty International met prisoners who claimed to have been on

remand for as long as two to seven years (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 2012).

2.7. Communication in crisis management

The ability to communicate with stakeholders, provide the right information, and successfully dispatch that information while at the same time creating a communication channel that also receives feedback is a highly essential feature of good crisis communication (Haupt & Azevedo, 2021; Strandberg & Vigsø, 2016). According to Sellnow and Seeger (2013, p.13) crisis communication is “the ongoing process of creating shared meaning among and between groups, communities, individuals, and agencies, within a crisis, in order to plan for, reduce, limit, and respond to threats and harm.” In crisis theories, the basis of most communication lies in the ability to lead the narrative when crises occur. People tend to look for someone to blame and hold responsible when something goes wrong. This is referred to as the Attribution Theory, which has been described by Coombs (2007). The ability to guide the story and explain the facts allows an organization to put the story being presented into perspective and to manage it.

During crisis situations there is a dire need for information and guidance. Often stakeholders want to know what is happening, especially in the event of a natural disaster or a crisis where people are at risk. People have a need to know what is happening, and they need information in order to stay calm and rational. In such situations, communicating information regarding a situation to the public can save lives, provide a sense of calm, and avert alarm and anxiety (Fredriksson, 2014). Crisis communication should be started immediately, as the crisis starts, possibly even before the crisis occurs, if precrisis signs are noticed. This communication needs to focus on

building and maintaining trust throughout the crisis and after (Nätti, Pekkarinen, Hartikka, & Holappa, 2014).

The loss of a stable state of an organization itself causes disruptions and is an invasion of comfort zones by those affected (Coldwell, Joosub, & Papageorgiou, 2012). The disruptions evoked from a crisis or traumatic event in addition to normal transformations will likely have a significant psychological effect on stakeholders in addition to physical and resource impacts. In order to understand a crisis event, the perspective of members of the affected community or potential affected community is needed (Glandon, 2015). This puts increased emphasis on the vital role organizational communication plays during a crisis and its determination on the perceived success or failure of the organization's management of the crisis. As such, leaders should seek professional advice from public relations professionals (internal and external) to guide them through turbulent times.

2.8. Crisis spokesperson

Along with the development of crisis plans and management teams, the decision as to who should be the organization's spokesperson during a crisis is of paramount importance. Crises are characterized as hyper-media events and surrounded by high-uncertainty (Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2011). This means that the media and public's thirst for information is exponentially increased during a crisis and the details and accuracy of what a company knows, can and should release is limited, changing or suspect, while the circumstances surrounding the event are fluid. It is, therefore, important that an organization have a competent spokesperson who can handle the pressure and volatility of a crisis. An organization's level of importance for crisis communication is reflected in spokesperson training (Coombs, 2010, p. 27). Many argue that argued that organizations should identify one key spokesperson to ensure that

the organization speaks with one voice (Lucero, Tan Teng Kwan, & Pang, 2009; Wilson & Patterson, 1987). The public face of the company involved in a crisis must convey the messages that help influence public perception of the company more favorably. Many researchers and practitioners (e.g. Chabria, 2003; Englehardt, et al., 2004; Littlefield & Quenette, 2007; Nadler, 2006; Seeger et al., 2003;) suggest that a company's CEO is the most effective spokesperson during a crisis. One reason for this is for organizational credibility, that is, Managers have a responsibility to demonstrate to stakeholders that the organization will keep its promises regarding the crisis amelioration (Ulmer, et al., 2007). The spokesperson also must represent an understanding of how the crisis has impacted others outside the company and demonstrate the competence that social legitimacy will be restored. This should be reflected in the rhetoric emanating from an organization during a crisis. Similarly, should conditions change, a manager can give more credence to new statements and be a responsible face for the organization (Lucero, et al., 2009). Pang, Cropp and Cameron (2006) stipulates that the involvement of a manager may assist an organization in adopting a more accommodating posture.

Other researchers argue for several spokespersons (Littlefield & Quenette, 2007) depending on areas of expertise. A manager may not have the technical expertise necessary or knowledge as to what serves the company and type of crisis best (Fearn-Banks, 1996). This suggests that a manager should focus primarily on assisting the organization in its management of the event in the manner in which he or she is most capable (Blythe, 2014). For some researchers and practitioners, the issue of whether a CEO or top executive should address the public is “when and how frequently.” Pines (2000) argues that a manager should and is expected to address the media “only in the

most egregious of crises when lives are lost”. Others suggest that a manager should be used sparingly, addressing the media and public at key times (Blythe, 2014).

2.9. The role of social media in crisis communication

In a recent study, the new forms of social media such as Facebook, Twitter and so on were recognized as an organization’s opportunity to lessen the impact in times of a crisis (Wendling, Radisch & Jacobzone, 2013). In the study, Wendling et al (2013) note that previously, radio, television, newspapers and other traditional media sources were used to transmit valuable information but nowadays social media such as Facebook and Twitter are tools which can assist an organization to disseminate and share information with as many people as possible while receiving feedback and responses from the public. This means that an organization employs the technology of social media as part of the communication process to the world. The continuous use of social media as a tool seems likely for the foreseeable future (Anderson & Rainie, 2010). Organizations that are sensitive to changes and usage of technology and the internet constantly use Twitter, blogs, mobile phones and other social network tools to spread the news of the crisis (Pang, Hassan & Chong, 2014). On the other hand, Schultz, Utz and Goritz (2011) identify that blogs are effective tools for repairing an organization’s image and reputation while preventing a boycott in crisis situations.

In order to do so, Jin and Liu (2010) have proposed the blog-mediated crisis communication model in order to help an organization or crisis communicators to monitor the blogosphere and respond appropriately to influential bloggers during a crisis. This aims to avoid inaccurate information from the public especially bloggers spreading bad news, which can cause the tarnishing of an organization’s reputation and image. Jin and Liu (2010) stated that during a crisis period, people seek immediate and in-depth crisis information in contrast with Stephens & Malone (2009) who claim that

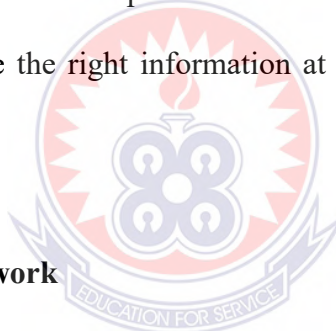
people usually tend to rely on word of mouth by using social media instead of searching for information directly from a corporate website or blogs. They argue that this is because blogs just tend to allow people to engage in knowledge sharing, reflection and the exchange of views, which normally encourages the public for the purpose of readership and builds trust after a crisis (Valentini & Romenti, 2011).

Thus, during a crisis, people tend to seek and use various types of social media to gather as much additional information as possible regarding the risks and responsibilities of the crisis (Valentini & Romenti, 2011). In addition, Facebook has more than one billion users worldwide (Hysenlika, 2012), which represent the most popular social media site. Hysenlika (2012) claimed that Facebook allows communicators (individual or organization) to deliver messages based on their needs quickly and effectively during a crisis period. Thus, social media can be an effective communication platform not only to be used to reduce the crisis impact but also as a tool to share knowledge and the management of a crisis by an organization (Yates & Paquette, 2011). Social media platforms include blogs, virtual communities, social networking, collaborative tagging and media file sharing sites such as YouTube (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

Social media's capacity is designed to enable people to connect, share and collaborate, which has resulted in its increasing use in personal, business and educational domains (White, King & Tsang, 2011). Walaski (2013) supports the study stating that social media platforms and methods include micro blogging, blogs, social networking sites which are Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Telegram and also YouTube. Nowadays, a variety of social media platforms enable organizations to provide information about a crisis effectively because they represent the new way of communicating: digital, computerised and communication technology that allows

networking in the fastest and most efficient ways to different audiences simultaneously (White, 2012). Social media has the potential to influence the manner in which individuals think, behave and respond to information and situations in general in times of crises (Paul, as cited by Schroeder & Pennington-Gray, 2014).

The role of social media as a communication platform during a crisis is important and unavoidable (Schroeder et al., 2013). Social media can be useful to improve preparedness and responses, reduce the cost of disasters, improve transparency of decisions and also increase the potential acceptance of outcomes (Wendling et al., 2013). Indeed, social media can be one of the primary crisis communication strategies during a disaster (Cho & Park, 2013). A recent study by Axel (2014) shows how the different types of social media are important in ensuring effective crisis communication in their capacity to provide the right information at the right time to the right people (Lecenciuc & Nagy, 2008).



2.10. Theoretical framework

The study followed the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) propounded by Timothy Coombs in 1995 on the effective role of communication during crises in the Ghana Prison Service. According to Timothy Coombs, crises are negative events that cause stakeholders to make ‘attributions’ (interpretations) about crisis responsibility, affecting how stakeholders interact with the organization. Bundy, Pfarrer, Short and Coombs (2017) assert that crises are perceived by managers and stakeholders as highly salient, unexpected, and potentially disruptive. Coping with a crisis can be considered a regular human activity.

During a crisis, it is important for an organization to communicate their response regarding the crisis with the organization’s stakeholders (Modeus, Paulsson &

Olsson, 2012). The organization or individual who will be crisis communicators should comprehend, construct and deliver messages to the directly or indirectly affected stakeholders and crisis communicators and should also prepare to receive and respond to feedback from these audiences (Zaremba, 2010).

2.10.1. Situational Crisis Communication Theory

Crisis management includes efforts designed to prevent and to detect potential crises, and to learn from crisis experiences (Caponigro, 2000; Cohen, 2000; Coombs, 1999b; Mitroff, 2001). Moreover, crisis management has emphasized post-crisis communication and the use of crisis response strategies, what organizational leaders say and do after a crisis hits (Coombs, 2007). Integrated with Benoit's (1995) image restoration and Hearit's (1994) corporate apologia, the situational crisis communications theory (SCCT) model attempts to map out post-crisis communication. More specifically, the model illustrates how crisis response strategies can be used to protect reputational assets after the presentation of instructing information, which is the first communication priority in a crisis (Sturges, 1994). According to Bergman (1994), Coombs (1998), and Sturges (1994), the SCCT attempts to explain the type of information that instructs stakeholders what to do to protect themselves from the crisis, the basics of what happened, and what the organization is doing to fix the situation and to prevent a recurrence of the problem.

For any crisis, compassion should be the primary response strategy that organizations contemplate when the source of the crisis is uncertain. Compassion is suggested as the answer to any crisis where fault is unknown because some crises produce victims and victims place unique demands on crisis managers (Ogrizek & Guiller, 1999). Expressing compassion involves acknowledging and expressing sympathy for victims without accepting responsibility or stating remorse in order to

avoid litigation issues. Legal expert, Cohen (1999), supports the recommendation that compassion be used when fault is unclear. Most accidents and product recalls (either human or technical error) have unclear fault at the onset of the crisis and may take weeks or months to clarify (Ray, 1999). According to Coombs (2007), the SCCT posits that the crisis situation determines which crisis response strategies will be most effective in protecting the organization's reputation. Reputational assets are important to an organization and are threatened by a crisis. It follows that crisis managers should try to maximize the reputational protection afforded by using appropriate crisis response strategies.

The SCCT has been the focus of numerous studies over the past (Coombs, 2007). To fully understand the development of the SCCT, it is important to understand the theoretical perspectives of Benoit's Image Repair Discourse and Hearit's apologia which have informed the growth of the SCCT. An organization's image, or reputation, is a valuable asset that represents trust, loyalty, and responsibility granted to an organization (Benoit & Brinson, 1999). In other words, when an organization fails to live up to its promises and expectations, negative consequences can occur for consumers, ranging from inconvenience to death. Whenever an organization is faced with a crisis that tarnishes its image, a domino effect of events starts to occur. When one crisis happens in an organization, customers immediately begin to become skeptical of how they use or buy that organization's products or services. After that initial shock of crisis, a domino effect, of sorts, starts to occur. An organization's image could influence how closely the government regulates its actions.

The situational crisis communication theory was developed after Benson (1998) challenged the crisis communication field to support his theory that there are a set number of crisis types and crisis response strategies. The SCCT matches each crisis to

its most appropriate response strategy. Coombs (2007) stated that meaningful matching is possible only if there is some correspondence/link between crisis types and crisis response strategies. Coombs and Holladay (1996) also stipulate that when a crisis event is repeated (stable), publics are more likely to attribute responsibility to the organization. Moreover, attributions of low external control indicate that the crisis was not under the control of groups outside of the organization; thus, the crisis should not be attributed to external agents. Attributions that entail a strong internal locus/intentionality suggest that the organization could have done something to prevent the crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 1996). This type of attribution suggests that the organization knew what to do to prevent the crisis and any steps needed to contain it.

One objective of crisis management is to prevent or lessen reputational damage to an organization (Barton, 1993; Pearson & Mitroff, 1993; Sturges, 1994). According to Coombs and Holladay (1996), attributions of organizational crisis responsibility should precipitate reputational damage. If communication can alter public's causal attributions or affect feelings generated by these attributions, crisis response strategies can be used to reduce reputational damage.

2.10.2. Relevance of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory to the study

Every organization faces crises, and while many are avoidable. This is because many crises aren't the fault of the organization. Instead, uncontrollable factors can create an unanticipated situational crisis that forces your business to respond immediately (Benoit & Pang, 2007; Drumheller & Benoit, 2004; Zhang & Benoit, 2004). Coombs (2007), states that SCCT projects people's reactions to the response strategy that is rolled out in order to manage the crisis. Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) by Coombs (2007), in its center, is built upon the attribution theory according to which, people search for the cause and effect of an event.

They deduce their role in an event and are faced with feelings either of anxiety, sadness or even joy depending on the outcome of the crisis.

The SCCT as a framework to this study presents a number of advantages. It ascertains. Whilst communicating with the public, it is important to read their body language. Since this study will explore the effective role communication plays during crisis it will seek to establish how and why it is important during a crisis. Even if there exists a good crisis communication plan in the institution; it must be rolled out, and the public must be aware about its existence and informed and as a result they need to know what strategies, channels or platforms are in place and how they can be used in the event of a crisis. Pearson and Clair (1998 in Kyhn, 2008, p.14) claim that an organizational crisis is a low probability, high-impact event that threatens the viability of the organization and is characterised by ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution, as well as by a belief that decisions must be made swiftly.

Yum and Jeong (2015) give explanation of several dimensions of attribution, like the locus (external vs. internal), controllability (controllable vs. uncontrollable), stability (stable vs. unstable), where locus is “the most fundamental dimension” (Yum & Jeong, 2015, p. 4). If such an event occurs, people tend to explain the crisis event by internal organizational faults, or that the crisis event is due to external factors of the environment, the fundamental dimension of attribution. Also, stakeholders and the public argue to what extent an organization was in control of the causes leading to the crisis and how stable or unstable these causes were. Coombs (1998) points out that in the first place, it is important for a crisis manager to understand the situation so that he or she can select an appropriate response strategy for the crisis. Whether a defensive or an accommodative response strategy should be applied, depends on how the situation

has to be categorised and thus the degree of the organization's responsibility that is allocated to a company by its stakeholders.

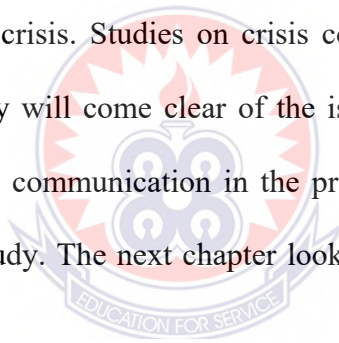
According to the SCCT, there are primary crisis response strategies and secondary crisis response strategies (Coombs, 2007). Within the primary crisis response strategies, there are deny crisis response strategies, diminish crisis response strategies and rebuild crisis response strategies, which all will be lined out in the following paragraphs (Coombs, 2007). The secondary response crisis response strategies, usually used additionally to the primary response strategies, are the bolstering crisis response strategies. The SCCT will provide the Ghana prison Officers during the crisis with certain guidelines that should be followed. These guidelines are concerned with the proper crisis response strategy matching the crisis situation, which is based on the stakeholder's perception of the organizational responsibility for the crisis and the prior relationship reputation among stakeholders (Coombs, 2007).

The 2-day riot at the Kumasi Central Prison that took place on February 4, 2015 involved the death of an inmate, a crisis situation for the Ghana prion Service. It was an event that had a negative effect on the Prison Service and its stakeholders, if handled improperly (Coombs, 2010). According to the SCCT model, for crisis types from the preventable cluster, primary rebuild response strategies and in addition secondary bolstering response strategies are worth considering. Those are thus primarily the strategies of compensation and full apology, but also the reminder, ingratiation and victimage strategies as secondary responses. Additionally, to the rebuild and bolstering strategies, the management guidelines suggest, that an organization has to give instructional information and must steadily adjust new information during crisis events (Coombs, 2010). In times of crisis, not only the response strategy is crucial, but also the medium itself, as examined by Liu, Jin and Austin (2013). They found that an

individual's reaction to a crisis is more positively when they came to know about it by the organization through social media than from traditional media or offline word-of-mouth communication. Thus, if the Ghana Prisons Service applies the accommodative crisis response strategies fitting the preventable cluster, stakeholders' reactions must have been neutral or positive rather than negative. This would confirm the effectiveness and applicability of the SCCT model.

2.11. Chapter summary

Theoretical bases, conceptual review, as well as, empirical studies visited, have provided evidence that during a crisis, people tend to seek and use various types of social media to gather as much additional information as possible regarding the risks and responsibilities of the crisis. Studies on crisis communication gave contradicting findings of which the study will come clear of the issue. There seems to be no work done locally towards crisis communication in the prison service sector in Ghana and this has necessitated the study. The next chapter looks at methodological aspect of the study.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0. Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology and design employed in the study. It gives details on population, sampling process, sample, data collection and data analysis. The study was designed as a qualitative study and so concerned itself with the depth of issues. The researcher applied the qualitative research approach of in-depth interviews to know how crisis communication is handled at the Ghana Prison Service.

3.1. Research approach

The research approach to this study as regards to the other three approaches (Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method), is qualitative. Qualitative research approach which is distinct to quantitative research method, is theoretical and interpretative in nature (Brennen, 2017; Creswell, 2013). It focuses on understanding complex ideas and making sense of language which is usually grounded on experiences humans and their relationships (Brennen, 2017). Qualitative studies for instance highlight latent meanings other than the quantity of events (Hancock, 2002). Creswell (2013) argues that qualitative research is mainly concerned with examining or exploring the meanings people attach to social phenomenon rather than measuring a situation using predetermined yardsticks.

Creswell (2013) further states that social realities are individually constructed based on preconceived thoughts and personal experiences. Qualitative research approach hinges on exclusive stages in analysing data by focusing on the various deigns and texts and images (Creswell, 2013). The definition is linked with the objective of this work as the research is aimed at finding out crisis communication in the Ghana Prisons Service: a case study of the Kumasi Central Prison Riots. According to Lincoln

& Guba (1985), qualitative approach is conducting research in its natural sense. With reference to the definition by Lincoln & Guba (1985), the researcher will engage in a content analysis of newspapers which were in their natural or original states without any bias or likelihood of external influences. Qualitative research approach hinges on exclusive stages in analysing data by focusing on the various designs and texts and images (Creswell, 2013).

3.2. Research design

The research design refers to the overall strategy that one chooses to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way thereby effectively addressing the research problem (Akhtar 2016). According to Bryman (2012, p. 46), a research design provides a framework for the collection of data. The research design helps the researcher to answer the research questions effectively and also serve as a guide to choose the appropriate data required for the study. The research design that was employed for this study was case study design. A case study approach is “valuable for using several forms of data to investigate behaviour, processes, and outcomes of individuals, groups, events, and organizations (Tuten, 2009).

In terms of the criticism that a case study cannot demonstrate evidence and measure research results as social research methodology can, Yin (2009) explained that In addition, Tuten (2009, p.269) pointed out that “a key benefit of the case study approach is the degree of context that is provided by a thorough review of relevant history and current events and people shaping the phenomenon of interest”. Merriam (1988) “identified the four characteristics that represent the essence of case study research as the following: (1) particularistic, (2) descriptive, (3), heuristic, and (4) inductive” (Zhou & Sloan, 2009 p. 269). Yin (2008) described five components of a case study research design: (a) a study’s questions, (b) its propositions, if any, (c) its

unit(s) of analysis, (d) the logic linking the data to the propositions, and (e) the criteria for interpreting findings. At first, Yin (2012) described only three steps: (a) defining a “case,” (b) selecting one of four types of case study designs, and (c) using theory in design work. When researchers select cases, they employ specific principles (Flyvbjerg, 2006). First, random selection can be used to avoid systematic biases. Both random samples and stratified samples are included in random selection. Second, in information-oriented selection, extreme/deviant cases, maximum variation cases, critical cases, and paradigmatic cases are included. After determining cases and samples, researchers gather data through observation, document analysis, historical materials, and even interviews and surveys (Tuten, 2009). The final step is analysis of collected data with credibility.

Meanwhile, Tuten (2009) more specifically explained the steps as (a) design and case selection, (b) protocol, (c) data collection, and (d) data and report based on the Yin’s (1989) description. To be more specific about collecting data, researchers establish protocols. Researchers can apply a flexible approach based on the protocol (Tuten, 2009). Also, researchers collect data including documents, observations, physical evidence, and interviews, and they take field notes with their perceptions and interpretations. Collected data will be reviewed to seek patterns, trends, events, comments, and so on. Meanwhile, Zucker (2009) suggested more specific steps as “a common case study protocol that guides the researcher’s methodology” as (a) purpose and rationale for the case study, (b) design based on the unit of analysis and research purpose, (c) data collection and management techniques, (d) description of the full case, (e) focus on the analysis built on themes linked to purpose and unit of analysis, (f) analysis of findings based on the purpose, rationale, and research questions (case perspective, disciplinary perspective, cross-case comparison, write-up of the case from

an emic perspective, and biography, autobiography, narratives), and (g) establishment of rigor (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability).

When researchers apply a case study approach, they select their cases based on one of these types of designs for case study. Yin (2003) aptly stated the rationale for the decision to use a case study approach for analyzing the research questions presented in this study: "In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (p. 1). Given the purpose of this study which is to assess crisis communication in the Ghana Prison Service, it has been deemed most suitable for the study to be handled as a case study. The case study, as Sypher (1997) saw it, allows the communication scholar to appropriately blend theory with practice. Sypher spoke of the flexibility the case study approach offers, particularly in its epistemic role. Sypher maintained case studies provide multiple ways by which scholars can acquire useful data, applying four basic categories based on case study focus: epistemic, rhetorical, skill enhancement, and narrative. The epistemic approach suggests case studies provide a new way of knowing. The rhetorical approach of a case study assumes an argument is inherent in the study; that some form of evidence will emerge that informs a particular point of view. The skill enhancement approach speaks to the assumption we learn from observing. Therefore, the investigator as communicator learns simply by observing, independently of whatever else may emerge from the data. Finally, the narrative approach to case studies suggests the value of the story rests, first and foremost, in the power of the story that emerges.

This current study consisted of two key components. One involved individual interview with persons in Ghana Prisons Service and were directly linked to the crisis

communication processes during and after the riot in Kumasi Central Prison. These interviews helped ascertain what written and/or ad hoc communication plan was implemented; individual perceptions of the efficacy of those plans; and reflections about the personal impact of attempting to initiate employee communication from a professional sense of responsibility. The second was documentary analysis which enabled the research to know at first hand the various stages that the committee resorted to laid down procedures in times of crisis. Having input from the documents tremendously increased the richness of the study, since it provided perspectives from multiple viewpoints.

Case studies are said to be more appropriate when the research is designed to gain an “in-depth understanding” (Fisher, 2007, p. 59), when a phenomenon within a “real-life context” is being studied and “a “how” or “why” question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control” (Yin, 1994, pp. 1-9). In a case study, the researcher gives a “narrative account of the subject of their study” (Fisher, 2010, p. 204). The research method used to conduct this study has been given a considerable amount of attention and has been carefully chosen (Fisher, 2010). This decision has led to an increased sense of confidence in this thesis and has also made the processes of finding things out clearer (Fisher, 2010, p. 169).

3.3. Study area

The developments of Prisons in the country started in the early 1800s when the promulgated with emphasis on punishments rather than safe custody. The Kumasi Central Prison was established in 1901, soon after the British Government gained grounds to rule in the Ashanti Region. The Prison was established to confine law-breakers to facilitate the smooth running of the British administration. In 1925, Kumasi Prison was reconstructed to increase the number of cells following the large number of

inmates within the province. The site covers an area of 44,424 sq. ft. allowing 500 cubic feet for each prisoner. The station has a number of workshops where inmates are trained in various trade/vocation and an infirmary manned by medical personnel who oversee the needs of inmates as well as officers in case of minor ailments.

3.4. Sampling

Wimmer and Dominick (2003) define a sample as a subset of the population that is representative of the entire population. A sample is a subset of a population selected to participate in the study, it is a fraction of the whole, selected to participate in a study. Sampling, especially in qualitative research, allows researchers to obtain a deeper understanding of a problem under study (Black, 2012; Stacks, 2011). The study made use of the purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling was used to choose the population based on their “expertise” of the phenomenon being studied (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p. 69). Purposive sampling technique is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities or characteristics the participant possesses (Etikan, Abubakar & Alkassim, 2016). Freedman, Pisani and Purves (2007), indicated that purposive sampling belongs to the category of non-probability sampling techniques, where sample members are selected on the basis of their knowledge, relationships and expertise regarding a research subject.

The researcher used this method because she believes the samples selected possess information relevant to this study. The study started with a particular purpose in mind, therefore the sample included participants who have interest and the requisite knowledge in the subject area. On the other hand, people who do not match the purpose of the study were excluded. The study therefore concentrated on people capable of providing information on the involvement of public relation practitioners in corporate social responsibility in Ghana. This purposive sampling technique was used to sample

those who were involved in the communication processes during and after the riot at the Kumasi Central Prison.

Bernard (2002) claimed that in qualitative research, informants who are experts in the research field may be more valuable to the research than randomly selected informants. This method of selecting participants who are experts or knowledgeable in a research topic is used in much research across the communication and management field, particularly when using an interpretive approach (Douglas, 2010; Hine & Preuss, 2009; Pearse & Kanyangale, 2009; Sligo & Tilley, 2009; Williams-Piehota et al., 2010; Zhou & Baptista Nunes, 2010).

A total of three (3) officers were selected for the study. Recruitment of participants was based on the availability and willingness of the practitioners to participate. Morse and Niehaus (2009) list three main criteria in selecting relevant participants to be interviewed: the participants must have relevant experiences or information for the particular study, be willing and available to participate, and lastly, possess the ability to articulate and express concerns and ideas.

3.5. Data collection techniques – Interview and Document Analysis

Collection of data was carried out using an interview and document analysis. An interview schedule was designed in order to obtain in-depth data from key participants within the institution's management. The schedules were aimed at standardizing the interview situation to ensure that uniformity in all the interview sessions was maintained. Through the interviews the researcher was able to minimize issues of non-response from the respondents. It was hoped that the interviews would provide a more realistic view on crisis communication practices at Ghana Prison Service. The interview guide was deemed acceptable because it offered a means to collect organized data from respondents in a systematic way as part of a structured interview (Somekh & Lewin,

2004). The interview guide was chosen because it provided more candid and more realistic responses. The interviews offered more in-depth insight into the thoughts and emotions of the respondents regarding crisis communication practices at Ghana Prison Service. However, questions were also posed on subjects that were separate from those addressed by the research questions. The researcher used formal interviews because she claimed that "with reasonably specific topics combined with very flexible order and follow-up questions" (Beaney, 2009, p.90), they are often less time-consuming to evaluate than unstructured interviews (Silverman, 2011). Throughout the interview process, the researcher often posed open questions about "generating data that provided an authentic insight into people's experiences" (Silverman, 2011) in the populations. In addition, the open questions were intended to allow the interviewee to continue to cooperate with the interviewer. These open questions offered differences in the questions posed and in order to extract various perspectives from the interviews.

As Baker (1984) pointed out, interviews are actively crafted and are as self-evident about the person questioned by the interviewer as they are about the subject under discussion. This means that each interviewee has his/her own attributes and should be handled accordingly. The interview theme guide was used to arrange the interviews. The researcher (interviewer) posed the key questions as set out in the theme guide and in the same order as the guide for reliability purposes (Silverman, 2011). However, the interviewees were allowed to talk more freely about topics that interested them or that seemed important to them.

A letter of introduction was taken from the head of department, to the Ghana prison Service and the data gathering exercise started with the help of some research assistants. Berger (2000) defines interview as a conversation between a researcher (someone who wishes to gain information about a subject) and an informant (someone

who presumably has information of interest on the subject). In this study, interviews will be conducted personally from the respondents to obtain information about the topic. For this study, the researcher employed in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview guide to collect data. Wimmer and Dominick (2011, p.139) defined an in-depth interview as an extensive one-on-one personal interaction in which much more information can be obtained.

3.6. Data analysis procedures

Describing the process of data analysis is crucial for establishing credibility, dependability and trustworthiness of data interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 in Ericson-Lidman & Strandberg, 2007; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The interpretivist nature of this research requires a balance in interpretation of data analysis that includes the researcher's knowledge and interpretation of the data as well as the respondents' own interpretation. According to Graneheim and Lundman (2004), it is impossible for a researcher to not get involved in the interpretation process while it is also very important to let the text speak for itself. This balancing act is particularly important when there are two dimensions within one research phenomenon.

Thematic analysis was used in answering the research questions. Thematic analysis was used since in the view of Marks and Yardley (2004), it constitutes the greatest appropriate way of determining human behaviour using interpretations and also gives a methodical element to data analysis. Thematic analysis in the context of this thesis is defined, based on Putnam and Fairhurst (2001, p. 79), as encompassing the study of "verbal codes, utterances, conversations, and patterns" within an organizational context. It is an important technique that allows a researcher to contextualise data based on the situation and themes extracted from the interview (Tee, 2008). Analysis of text in interview transcripts for this research was conducted using an emic approach to

thematic analysis. According to Taylor and Trujillo (2001), emic and inductive analyses “preserve the naturally occurring features and discourse of the organizational scene and depict consensual and contested meanings among organizational members” (p. 183). Typically, inductive analysis is conducted in the initial stage where themes, categories and patterns are identified directly from the data collected (Daymon & Holloway, 2011).

The specific procedure for identifying themes was based on Owen’s (1985) thematic analysis. Owen (1985) adopted thematic analysis to interpret discourse in the relationship building of partners. In another study, Zorn and Ruccio (1998) analysed the use of motivational communication skills to inspire sales teams, where thematic analysis was used to interpret interview transcriptions. According to Zorn and Ruccio (1998), thematic analysis is a method that “allows the researcher to identify themes within individual perspectives”, in addition to finding themes common to all or most interviewees (p. 480). Owen’s (1984) thematic analysis procedure looks at texts as “the presence of recurrent, repetitious and forceful discourse” (Owen, 1985, p. 2). Therefore, at the initial stage, transcribed interviews were read thoroughly to achieve an overall sense of meaning among all of the participants. Themes were then identified based on Owen’s (1984) thematic identification process, which was based on “recurrence of the same thread of meaning in different words, repetition of words, phrases or sentences and forcefulness of vocal inflection, volume or dramatic pauses” (Owen, 1994 in Zorn & Ruccio, 1998, p. 480).

This specific thematic method allows for validity and making sense of constructs. The use of an open coding or emic approach is relevant in order to achieve depth in meanings. An emic approach in thematic analysis within an interpretivist approach seeks “meaning in the data that goes beyond the surface” (Mills et al., 2006,

p. 12), is open to what emerges from the data set as well as allowing for meanings to be interpreted by both the participants and the researchers' views and experiences. Further, emic and inductive approaches are recommended for thematic interpretations of organizational scenes and structures that signify a deeply rooted understanding of a particular organizational interpretation. Charmaz (2000) described the interpretivist approach as producing meanings that participants and researchers seek and create together.

Themes from the transcripts were detected and interpreted based on what was being said by the participants and what was understood by me, as a researcher and based on my past knowledge and experiences. Meanings were constructed within the context of the study. This process is employed by “condensing, coding and sorting into groups on the basis of similar content and abstracted into subthemes” (Ericson-Lidman & Strandberg, 2007, p. 202).

3.7. Ethical considerations

It is imperative and important for any researcher to take care of the ethical problems that control science. This is because social studies need to plan themselves for any ethical problems in the design of the research in order to develop a sound ethical practice (Neuman, 2006). In this research, the privacy of the participants were protected by obtaining their permission to select whether or not to participate first, since one of the concepts of social science includes the active involvement of the participants. In this regard, reasons were given for the aims of the research, as well as its relevance in improving the voluntary participation of participants. There is a belief that subjecting participants to answering questions in a questionnaire could cause physical and emotional damage to them. Thus, the statements in the questionnaire were framed in a

manner that provided the participants with a range of choices and free will, so that they could choose the things relevant to them.

Participants were ensured of confidentiality. The researcher disclosed her identity to the research participants in order to rid their minds of any suspicions and deceptions regarding the research and also to guarantee that they do not disclose the knowledge they have with others. As far as anonymity is concerned, participants were not asked to include their identification on the questionnaire. In order to prevent intellectual fraud in science, known as plagiarism, the thesis specifically followed the prescribed norms of scientific activity in order to avoid plagiarism.

3.8. Trustworthiness

In order to validate and make trustworthy the study, this research was founded on the criteria of trustworthiness accorded to reflexivity, adequacy of data, and adequacy of interpretation (Morrow, 2005). Invariably, this involved an understanding of the researcher's experiences and his/her world and how it could affect the research process. In line with reflexivity, I was aware of my assumptions, predispositions and personal experiences about research and made them overt to the self and others through bracketing (Fischer, 2009). The recorded interviews were played back to the respondents and transcripts of the interview were given to the respondents. The themes generated from the analysis of the interview data were also checked by participants, what Creswell and Creswell (2018) termed as "member checking". This was done to ensure the correction of necessary mistakes and present a valid data. The researcher also took time to give thick, rich description of the steps leading to the collection of data, analysis and interpretation.

It also relates to the long duration of the interview and follow-up interviews in anticipation of technology failures with reference to the tape recorder used for the interview. Thus, the failure of the tape recorder to record the voice. The researcher paid attention to relevant plagiarism rules for the conduct of research by ensuring that authorities that were sourced or quoted in the study were duly acknowledged and referenced using in-text citation and a list of references. Also, based on the postulations of Lincoln and Guba (2000), in preserving the credibility of the research, I adopted two of the stated means in achieving trustworthiness comprising persistent peer scrutiny of the research project. Peer and academic scrutiny of the research was employed through the period of the study and was achieved through constructive feedbacks offered by my supervisor, peer researchers and other academics. These fresh perspectives and additions to the study enabled me to fine tune and present stronger arguments for the study.

My association with the Ghana Prison Service as a staff proved beneficial because the respondents were those I have known as a staff with the Service. It was easy to approach my interviewees and they also asked severally if I needed any input from them. They treated me as their colleague. As I analysed the data, I reflected on my involvements with the views of minimising biases that might influence my interpretation. Another validity check is prolonged engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation of data sources through extensive document analysis and interviews gave the researcher opportunities to ask and validate the question on crisis communication and crisis management.

3.9. Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the methodological approach that were used for the study. This chapter looked at the research design, data sources, data analysis, sample size and sampling methods that were used to collect data and the ethical issues.



CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0. Introduction

This chapter deals with the results from the data analysis as well as the discussion of the findings. The analysis was done guided by the research questions. The discussion on each finding comprised the interpretation of the data supported with previous findings from the related literature. The study was undertaken to assess the effective role of communication during crises in the Ghana Prison Service. The data collection method was unstructured interview and document analysis. The documents that were consulted were the GPS strategic Plan (2015), the ad-hoc committee report on the riots and crisis communication manual. These documents were private documents of the GPS and was not allowed to be taken out but access was granted the researcher to glance through since the study was purely academic. In all, 3 respondents were used. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What crisis communication strategies were employed during various stages of the riot in Kumasi Central Prison?
2. During the riot in Kumasi Central Prison, what effective implementation mechanisms of communication in crisis management were used?
3. What are the challenges that affected the effective implementation of a crisis communication plan in Kumasi Central Prison during the riot?

4.1. RQ1. What crisis communication strategies were employed during various stages of the riot in Kumasi Central Prison?

To answer this question, the riot was analysed to know how the Crisis Management Team went about with the riot.

4.1.1. Using the T.A.P strategy in the Kumasi Central Riot

Prevention entails attempting to reduce known risks that could result in a crisis. This is a component of the prison's risk management programme. According to participant 1, when it comes to crisis in the prison, it is well catered for and with the riots, it came out surprisingly.

The intelligence officer on a daily basis collects intel from the prisoners so this always informs our daily briefings but the riot came out as a surprise. We did not get any intel on this until the day it happened. Even where the fire started was a mystery. There is no way we could have known that such a thing was going to happen and out of the blue it happened. We have learnt our lessons and hope it does not repeat itself again.

Participant 2 however was of the view that there was no pre-crisis phase as the riot was not a crisis. According to him:

The best time for a communicator to get ready is in advance of the emergency, when they can create a crisis communication plan, draft messages, think of potential audiences, and anticipate communication requirements. There was no hint so I cannot say it was a crisis. We have been having drills to such effect so we were fully aware of what to do. All our staff were brought to bear. It was the media who escalated the situation. We have been having such riots and we handle them without any person getting wind of it.

This statement supports the stance of Barton (2001) and Coombs (2006) who states that organizations are better able to handle crises when they have a crisis management plan, have a designated crisis management team, conducts exercises to test the plans and teams.

On the communication processes that ensued during the riot, the crisis management was summoned immediately to start dealing with both the headquarters and the media who were churning out third-party information to the public. Participant 1 and 2 indicated that the moment the riot began, the crisis management team were up and doing as they were liaising with headquarters, drafting releases.

Mrs. Matilda Baffour Awuah, the then Director General of the Ghana Prisons Service tasked the Director of Public Affairs for the Ghana Prisons Service DSP Vitalis to act as the spokesperson for the Central Prison until the situation had receded. We remember, since we were part of the team that, we adopted the T.A.P (Truth, Assessment and Poise) method in dealing with the situation.

Truth: *they were able to articulate the situation with honesty to the public by first of all debunking rumours that were in circulation in the media. The message that was churned out eventually had the facts in it which allowed the authorities to speak the truth. They were able to appear genuine and communicated what they knew on the situation.*

Assessment: *they were prepared to respond to questions and challenges from the people and the media who were giving false information to the public. The right sentences and word were carefully chosen. Meanwhile, counterpoints were prepared for any challenges that they may encounter.*

Poise: *Poise was more than just being confident by the team. They maintained a positive attitude in spite of the crisis they were facing at the prison and in the community. (Participants 1 and 2).*

Augustine (1995) notes that plans and teams are of little value if they are never tested. Management does not know if or how well an untested crisis management plan with work or if the crisis team can perform to expectations. The participants indicated that during the riot, the command structure changed immediately because of the magnanimity of the situation. The highest-ranking officer in the chain of command, that is the Regional Commander was made the Interim Commander and he was also made the chair of the CMT.

1. Shut down: The Prison was shut down with every room and workshops closed since there were going to be other individuals who were not prison officers. A curfew was put in effect and was communicated effectively to the media.
2. Intelligence briefing: The intelligence officer was briefing the team every 15 minutes since he was conducting intel interviews from the captured and injured prisoners.

3. Press release: The CMT issued a first press release on why the military and the police were involved in the attempts to retake the prison from the prisoners. According to the release and memo sent to the Headquarters, there was going to be three external teams: first-time fighting team, reserve group and the rescue/evacuation team.
4. De-activation: the riot was not taken for granted. The administration and the CMT set up a full-scale enquiry into the circumstances that led to the riot with the view of preventing a recurrence. Portion of a release said: *if investigations found prison warden(s) to have started the outburst, the service would never shield or protect that officer.*
5. Investigation Committee: A committee was immediately set up to investigate the riot since it was believed external persons masterminded it. The committee was made up of members from the GPS, Police, Military and the Regional Security Committee with the Ashanti Regional Crime Officer, Superintendent Peter Baba, leading the investigative team. It made recommendations that the Ghana Prisons Service put a freeze on the promotion of 24 officers who were on duty during the attempted jail break based on recommendations made by an investigative committee set up by the Ministry of the Interior and the Ghana Prisons Service to look into the matter. *“The ability of some of the inmates to beat the checkpoint to lack of scanners at the entrance and gave an assurance that close circuit television (CCT) cameras would be fixed at strategic locations in the prison next month to help expose any form of wrongdoing by the officers and the inmates,”* Participant 3 said.

4.1.2. Routine task of the communication team

To determine how the Ghana prison Service operates during crisis, the study established that there are simulations almost every day to ensure effective communication among members at the prison. Tips and solicited information are gathered from the inmates so as to avert any crisis. Coombs (2004) argues that, collecting information about issues, risks, and stakeholders is of no value unless it is analysed to determine if the information contains prodromes. Crisis managers determine if the information really does suggest that a crisis is possible. The premise in finding warning signs early is to locate those that can significantly affect the organization and to take action to manage them. However, the participants were unanimous in saying that there is no “normal” day; however, at least one officer said that a day full of communicating with your colleagues in the other regions is routine. A participant said:

“No one day is like the other. You never know what’s going to happen. You always have to be proactive whereas a crisis response is reactive. We are more proactive”

Most of the participants stated that their day-to-day work is more reactive as they respond to media inquiries and take on projects handed down from top hierarchy. Routine responsibilities tend to include typical public relations tasks, such as publications, long-term projects, media relations, and news releases. Daily public information tasks include media relations, publication development, public awareness campaigns, responding to public inquiries, and writing speeches for service officers.

“We respond to media on a variety of issues. That can include anything from a telephone conversation or interview to doing something on air, on camera, live, or recorded. I also work to get information out on our intra-comm and help coordinate any public things that we do. And I also work with our colleagues in the other regions so as to prepare if a major case is to happen,” said one officer.

Another participant said:

Every person here in public affairs directorate is dedicated to a different function but when a crisis situation arises, we all work as one unit. Every individual must ensure that the communication going out is the right one, coach our colleagues what to say and how to say it.

The document analysis showed that the primary mission of the public affairs directorate is to “provide information to the public that will help them be better prepared for emergencies and crisis at the GPS.” This confirms the stance of Fredriksson (2014) that During crisis situations there is a dire need for information and guidance. This puts increased emphasis on the vital role organizational communication plays during a crisis and its determination on the perceived success or failure of the organization’s management of the crisis.

4.1.3. Approvals for news releases during and after a crisis

Because each prison has a slightly different structure, the news release approval process varies as well. A principal prison officer during and after a crisis news release must be approved by the Director-General or one of his deputies.

“Simple information requests, such as those from the general public, do not need the Comptroller-General’s approval. However, if we are dealing with sensitive issues, we will have the Comptroller-General or his deputy sign off on it. Even our director of communications does not have the authority to sanction a news release without the express consent of the Comptroller-General,” a participant said.

Sensitive issues such as rioting in the prisons, food rationing, outbreak of diseases that have come to the public domain takes a longer period to be addressed. A crisis press release is a public relations (PR) tool used to respond to a negative situation. Callison and Zillmann (2002) posit that crisis incidents clearly show the complexities of maintaining credibility with messaging and of doing a good job at it. Coombs (2004)

argued that, collecting information about issues, risks, and stakeholders is of no value unless it is analyzed to determine if the information contains prodromes. The media continue to serve as an important emergency information system during a crisis and they do this very well. Professional media representatives that recognize their role in public safety serve communities around the nation. Because of their immediacy, television and radio are particularly important in crises that develop quickly. Radio is very resilient and flexible. In many cases, local stations have switched format to provide 24-hour coverage of an event, including call-ins.

Journalists have a responsibility to report information they believe is honest and objective. In the first critical hours or days of an emergency, fairness is of utmost importance. The most ethical way for a public agency to facilitate media relationships is to provide all media outlets with the same access at the same time. The key is to have consistent information flowing back and forth among local, state, regional, and national, levels. A crisis communication plan is a vital part of emergency preparedness and response. A company's success is dependent, in part, upon its reputation. Having a solid crisis communication plan, which has been integrated with the crisis management or operations plan, well-tested and understood and practiced by company employees, can not only save a company's reputation, but at times, can also save lives (Coombs, 2004).

Crisis management can be perceived as a proactive process with the given steps and features, with the aim of preventing and effectively dealing with a crisis. To resolve a crisis, a crisis team or crisis manager should be established to deal with it. The role of the team and the managers is not only determined in the event of a crisis but should also be activated to a certain degree in the pre-crisis period, at least in terms of knowledge of the preventive measures or the mechanisms that are implemented. The aim of proactive management is to avoid the crisis or mitigate its consequences. However, as mentioned

in the description of the concept of Mittrof, Pauchant and Shrivastava (1988), it cannot be assumed that this will happen. If, after all, the organization goes into crisis, then it can be referred to as the *defensive and recovery phase*, where the main activity is aimed at a consistent identification of the crisis and its causes.

4.1.4. Transition from Routine to Crisis

Each officer has a different approach to the transition to crisis mode. Some officers work more from behind the scenes, while others are highly visible and work side-by-side with the director of public affairs and the Director-General. Most of the officers drop their routine duties during a crisis response, but one stated that his unit has to juggle daily responsibilities during a crisis.

4.1.4.1. Role of officers

The role of the communications officers at the Ghana prison Service is basically to communicate with both the internal and external publics of the Service. Thus, an individual responsible for internal and external messaging has broad responsibilities that serve the organization as part of pre- and post-crisis discourse and as an element of long-term strategies in crisis management. The communication officer's role in the Service is important during both the planning and implementation of crisis communication strategies. According to the participants, various elements and phases of crisis demand responsibilities of many players in the Service. A participant said:

Their role is to plan against negative contingencies and to exercise damage control when a problem occurs. Personnel involved in crisis management have ongoing responsibilities that theoretically should be routine and ongoing assignments.

This statement sits with the stance of Thompson (2018) that crisis management and crisis communication tend to be on an “as-needed” basis. Given that crisis management is rarely a priority among business executives, its lesser status in relation to legal advisement is not surprising (Thompson, 2018). Coombs (2004) also asserts that crisis managers determine if the information really does suggest that a crisis is possible. Crisis issues are pervasive and intrusive; they often cut across the entire organization and the outcomes may be substantial, immensely expensive and damaging. They touch people and divisions across the organization and affect morale.

A fully prepared communication manager, therefore, must be adept and skillful in his/her trade, a leader in the company in terms of developing a long-term internal strategy on roles and responsibilities in crisis management, and be able to be intuitive and flexible in managing a crisis situation. (Director of Public Affairs)

Another noted:

Communication is an important element in almost all successful crisis management efforts. Organizations or individuals that communicate poorly during crises often make bad situations worse.

Crisis management involves situations in which there are increased stakes and reduced time for decision-making, especially when information has become public. The circumstances often necessitate actions to minimize mistakes and mitigate losses. Much of the success or failure of crisis management is dependent upon prior strategic planning, a dedicated process, and intuitive thinking. Placing these tasks within the responsibility of a single employee is a formidable assignment, and very risky for that individual. This confirms Conrad and Poole’s (1999) assertion that when situations and symbolic acts are ambiguous, employees have much more freedom to reinterpret them and act in ways that differ from what the leader intended. Often, a communicator can

provide wordsmithing and public relations strategic thinking in many types of settings in which crises are currently occurring or situations in which they might occur.

The study established that Ghana Prison Service, as an organization, attaches a great deal of importance to crises because of the negative consequence crises have on organizations when they occur. The interviewee further noted that one major strategy they adopt to manage crises, and largely to avoid the occurrence of crises is through effective internal communication practices. According to the participants, the specific communication practices used in preparing employees towards crises involve series of organizational meetings at the headquarters and regional offices (prison yards). They emphasized that the Ghana Prison Service believes that having frequent meetings with the staff is a major part of their crisis's preparation process. This is because involving employees in meetings regularly makes them feel like they are a "part of the Service, so they understand you when you get into crises"(P1). The interviewees elaborated on how meetings help them in communicating crisis preparedness information to their employees: These include, the director of public affairs and the two deputies of the Ghana Prison Service meeting every Monday, a weekly regional general meeting through zoom, emergency meetings when there are crises threats to be dealt with, employee durbar which helps to bring staff together to discuss and be informed of the Service's crisis plan. The quote below captures the thrust of the discussion:

Ghana Prison Service crisis communication begins with top management and it extends gradually to all employees and feedback flows from staff who are manning the various prisons to top management through the same means of communication. We make sure that there is constant flow of information between management and staff. This is how it works: the Director-General holds meeting with the senior members every Monday morning and after which the director of public affairs is also briefed to be abreast with what has transpired and he in turn relays same info to the various regions. There is also a crisis team comprising the director-general and the 7 directors responsible for the operations and administration of the Service.

They are informed of any potential crisis in the prisons on a daily basis. (Participant)

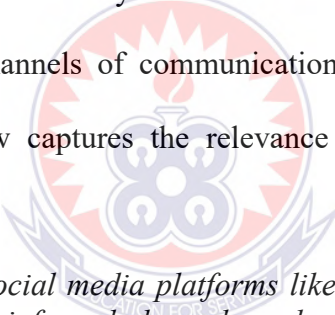
The interview further showed that, when a crisis goes beyond the capacity of the Officers-In-Charge of the establishments of the Prison Service, the matter is referred to the national headquarters for the necessary interventions. The participants however stressed that not all crisis-related information is sent to the national headquarters. Restructuring (Shönfeld et al., 2018), redesign or reengineering (Luca, 2014; Repa, 2012) can be used as a solution and corrective action, when it is necessary to reassess the overall or particular activities of an organization, especially its processes. In some cases, as a result of the crisis, the company will be rescued (Synek, 2011; Schönfeld et al., 2018), which allows the organization to stabilise its operations although the restructuring rate is greater. In these cases, the managers and the crisis teams focus on personnel reform, reengineering the organization's activities, reforming the organization's management style and then modifying the strategy to update the steps that lead to its implementation.

4.1.5. Channels used in communicating internal crisis preparedness information

According to the participants, the Ghana Prison Services' crisis communication channels are the same as its Internal Communication channels. A participant listed the channels as telephones, memos, e-mails, departmental meetings, durbars, intranet, website, notice board and newsletters. He categorized the channels into two – formal (departmental meetings, mobile phone calls, emails, website, notice boards, memos, durbars, newsletters and the intranet) and informal (identified union bodies and the interactive social media platforms, interpersonal communication and grapevines). The participant added that:

The telephone, memos and circulars are used during emergencies... Daily, weekly and monthly meetings are held all the time and officers work with staff throughout the day through the telephone to receive and disseminate timely information to deal with (potential) crisis situations...

According to the director of public affairs, departmental meetings, durbars and the intranet system are the most effective channels to communicate crisis prevention and response messages to staff because they ensure two-way communication and enhance interaction between all staff and a single response is formulated in order the media gets to know about the crisis situation. Per the data from the interview, the informal channels are very effective as far as managing and communicating crisis information is concerned. The participants explained that the informal channels help receive information quicker than any other means of communication. This is further complemented by these channels of communication to ensure instant or immediate feedback. The quote below captures the relevance of the informal communication channels:



Let's take the social media platforms like our WhatsApp group chats and other informal channels such as the union groups or interpersonal conversation. Because they are informal, I receive information via them than the formal or official ones that sometimes involve bureaucratic system of statistics and reports writing. Because most of these officers have my number, all they do is to call me or send me messages about a potential problem that can degenerate into a crisis. From there, I move on to tackle the issue, till formal complaints are lodged. Again, we have WhatsApp groups where we chat. I monitor from the conversations on the PR group chat which am part, to identify staff' grievances and the issues that deserve management's attention. I then move to solve the issue. Sometimes you can gather information through common informal conversation with the staff.

In spite of the significant role's communication channels play in communicating information on crises, the Director said some of the channels also have their shortcomings. He explained the challenge with departmental meetings and durbars:

The success of durbar solely depends on officers' readiness to be interactive... sometimes there is what I call zero rapport because employees are afraid to step on toes and be reported by management. Sometimes I do all the talking, which does not help in identifying potential crises.

Effective communication protects staff and other stakeholders during a crisis, build trust in the workplace, prevent the spread of misinformation in the workplace, prevent panic and help employees feel secure, prevent the threat a crisis may have on the organization's strategic objectives, reputation, and viability, align employees with the overall crisis management strategy and enable them to work towards the same goals, Align the internal and external messages. Crisis communication between crisis teams, managers and the organization's management plays an important role. According to O'Connor and Noyce (2003), there is not one crisis solution for every organization. a major source of problems in crisis response lies in the communication between response organizations. Organizations that want to improve their crisis management must change their behavior with respect to relationships with other organizations and build a common understanding of the situation and of the contribution of other organizations in crisis response. Further, there is still no integrated approach in the research aimed at understanding how organizations can learn from past crises.

4.2. RQ2: During the riot in Kumasi Central Prison, what effective implementation mechanisms of communication in crisis management were used?

Premised on the theory of SCCT and the conceptual framework designed for the study, the researcher conducted a manual coding of data to establish patterns of communication before, during and after a crisis at the prison. This research question

focus was on finding out factors that affect the implementation of effective communication in crisis management.

4.2.1. Organizational culture shaping the internal crisis communication

Transparency and cohesion are not only types of internal crisis communication strategies but significant elements of organizational culture. To be transparent and open not only towards external but as well to internal stakeholders is a signal to employees that they are not there only to provide a certain service but to act as company's spokesperson even after working hours.

If we are talking about internal crisis communication then it is again to inform them (employees) so they could feel safe and secure and go back to their families, tell what has really happened and still feel safe (P3).

On the other hand, internal communication at its best can be an incentive for creating a more productive and more recognizable organizational culture. Such culture in that case becomes the Service's brand. *"If we look at the internal communication from a bigger perspective it is important that one has the understanding where one works, where the Service is going, what are the goals. In general, we are talking about building a brand"* (P1). Another participant claims that organizational culture can be an obstacle for successful and effective internal crisis communication.

4.2.2. Crisis coordination

It is proposed that as the nature of crises is threatening and often requiring an urgent response, yet the network of stakeholders within the organizational teams is not always hierarchical, organizing a response can require a delicate mix of persuasion and "command and control." After an analysis of the data, it is suggested that the coordination of the crisis is dictated largely by the leadership styled applied.

I try to encourage people to come along with me (Participant 2)

You need to tailor communications of the decisions depending on the team, and the stage of their development. (Participant 1)

Participant 3 who's role is to coordinate and control operations actions during a crisis at the prisons suggests that a command-and-control leadership approach is more effective in times of crisis:

I tend to use simple direct language, which is "go downstairs, get that thing". Yeah. And I'd say to somebody else to say, I tend not to use them, you know, persuasive. Because I don't think in a crisis that you should have to persuade someone times of crisis. (Participant 3)

Participant 1 who has climbed through the ranks however disagreed with participant 3's method of leadership:

I think everybody needs to buy into a situation and recognize so I don't believe in the situation where somebody is just doing something that they're told to do it. (Participant 1)

A strategic plan is an essential document for any institution. It is truly the engine that drives every institution. This is affirmed through the Service's strategic plan where the institution aims to put together its strengths around accredited opportunities, with a view to addressing its weak links thus reducing the threat to its growth. According to the respondents several challenges that emerged were associated with management of crisis episodes. The challenges identified operate at various stages of crisis management including the planning phase, execution of plans and post communication. Furthermore, the challenges were cited as external to the communicating entity as well as internal to the institution. The challenges mentioned include fear and uncertainty, contradicting messages and inadequate resources. Other challenges cited were unpreparedness by the communicating entity, managing the rumors, distorted messages and poor timing of communication. External challenges comprised lack of or limited freedom of speech.

Lack of use of effective communication channels to address problems the institution is faced with and improper message design and timing which ought to be communicated to the stakeholders. If the crisis management team does not identify its targeted audience the message could be directed to the wrong audience and as a result will not be effective. According to Ahmed (2006) crisis communication usually focuses on clarifying issues affecting the stakeholders and stating the impact they are bound to have, through provision of adequate information about what has happened and what is on-going and extent of damage or harm to property and reputation.

4.2.3. Leadership Styles

Several different leadership styles, behaviours and approaches can be identified by analyzing excerpts from the transcribed interviews. Participant 3, whose role as a senior officer to manage daily operations and ensure strict protocols and procedures are being followed, strongly leans towards a more “command and control” approach:

Someone who comes to me and says, I made a mistake. And, you know, I can deal with that. I think that's pretty much most of the time, but there's the odd time when I'll react more aggressively, and that's when either the person is blasé about it and doesn't care, or has made the same mistake many times. That's the frustration coming out because it didn't have to be like this.
(Participant 1)

This commanding leadership style is also apparent when Participant 3 discusses the approach he applies to communication techniques applied during a crisis: “*I tend to use simple direct language, which is “go downstairs, get that thing” ... “I don't think in a crisis that you should have to persuade someone (to do a task)”* (Participant 3). Participants 2 and 1 also naturally lean towards positive climate leadership coaching and democratic leadership styles:

I try to encourage people to come along with me I wouldn't
(Participant 2)

It means that as a group or as a Service we can avert the crisis together. (Participant 1)

All participants appeared to utilize situational leadership and emotional intelligence when communicating:

There are certain individuals who you know will need more background in something or somebody who will not want on the background. They just want the bones of it, or there are the other individuals who have the sense to set certain elements of it. (Participant 2)

So for some people being clear on what you want means a brief instruction. For others, it's more exhaustive. (Participant 3)

This participant states that in times of organizational crisis, he tends to use a more directive approach. Simple, unambiguous language is used to ensure there is no misinterpretation to further compound the issue.

I tend to use simple direct language, which is “go downstairs, get that thing”. Yeah. And I'd say to somebody else to say, I tend not to use them, you know, persuasive. Yeah. Because I don't think in a crisis that you should have to persuade someone times of crisis. (Participant 3)

All respondents with no exception indicate that when crisis strikes there is only one direction of internal communication, namely top-down. It is the upper management that mostly lead in any communication process. There is only one example of a two-way communication where officers are left with an opportunity to communicate directly towards management in crisis situations.

We start with informing officers. In urgent cases they can contact me (communication professional), but usually it stays within their nearest managers. (P1).

4.2.4. Categorisation of crisis

Latest crises events throughout the world have added new types of crises to the list of already existing ones. In relation to this study respondents have identified or mentioned different types of crises which in their essence can be classified into two

major clusters of crises. They make a distinction between common types of crises and those unexpected ones.

Normally, I would say in our line of work, it is always human related. We are a key stakeholder of the Criminal Justice System of Ghana contributes to the maintenance of internal security by maintaining an efficient, humane, and safe reformatory penal system operated within the laws of Ghana.(P3).

This is obvious indicator of crisis recurrence that later makes these types of crises to be classified among those common ones in the Service. However, this does not mean that this type of crisis can be foreseen. It is only its regular frequency that makes these types of crises common. Other participants gave staff agitations as another crisis example that is common in the Ghana Prison Service.

I think that every year there is a situation where some of our officer cry foul that their promotions are due but they are not being promoted while some say that their work does not commensurate with their pay. These agitations mainly come from the regions. For us this is not even a crisis. This is a part of normal behaviour. (P2)

It is obvious that the recurrence of such an event attribute this type of crisis with commonness or makes the activities to counterfeit the incident part of “standard procedure” (P3). Finally, P1 sums up the general experience by saying “*This specific crisis is a very general incident that can always happen and is common problem in our business.*” Herman (1963) states that organizational crisis is unexpected or unanticipated by the organization. Regardless of how secure or sure an organization or communication professional is, crisis can still happen. This is confirmed in the following quote:

We knew that we needed to communicate this in a proper way and we were 100 percent sure of positive response that we could count on. In that sense it came to us as a sort of surprise that customers could in fact get angry, people started to threaten us. (P2).

This entirely reflects the unforeseen/unexpected element of a crisis. According to Fearn-Banks (2002), this unpredictable event is in fact a threat to various stakeholders that can have negative impact and generate negative outcomes. Often these crises come from within organization and therefore we can talk of internal and external factors of unexpected crisis.

Back in time we had a person working on important projects in the prison was a whistleblower. The person tried to point out that there were things done in a wrong way. The person was sacked and it wasn't handled well. Media got their hands on this. This made a big turmoil in service. In this case we did not have the phase of raising the preparedness level since everything happened so fast and so unexpected. (P2)

Unexpected crises leave no time or space to prepare for, they emerge suddenly and out of nowhere often even leaving no opportunity to follow the existing protocols and routines *“If one find himself in a crisis one does not have time to go and look for folders in order to follow the procedure” (P1).*

There are so many questions running through the heads of employees when crisis strikes: *“How does this affect me as a person? Is it worth it for me to do this job for this cause? Am I putting myself at risk? How does one fight this uncertainty?” (P3).* Depending upon the approach service chooses to implement different outcomes in relation to officers and prisoners are generated. A crisis naturally creates uncertainties among internal stakeholders as well and study's respondents recognize employees being the most important ones.

Coworkers are the most important and we need to protect them first. Our coworkers need to feel that we support them. They need to know that we are responding directly to crisis, that we are open and transparent as much. (P3)

This decisiveness to be transparent and provide information in order to minimize or close the information gap and hence minimize the uncertainty starts from the moment crisis occurs and continues throughout all stages of a crisis.

When in crisis it is all about keeping people safe and informed over the entire time to show during the whole time that we have a control over this. It is important to provide people with information. (P2)

It is not only important to communicate over the entire crisis but even to communicate when there is nothing to communicate about “*If there is an urgent situation in that case we are informing people more often even if there is nothing new to talk about. An hourly briefing is what we do regardless whether or not we have something to share or not*” (P3). This is reconfirmed by another participant stating “*Even if we had no information the only thing we could state is that we don’t have any information. It is always important to communicate even if you don’t have something to communicate about, but you go out there and say it*” (P2). “*Safety first...*” (P1) in combination with “*All the employees were informed and they knew what did we do about this.*” (P3) is the practical manifestation of Mazzei’s and Ravazzani’s (2015) first internal crisis communication strategy that combines security objectives with informative content.

Sharing an information is the first postulate of this particular strategy and proves to be the most prevailing one among all respondents and their respective companies. It is not only about transparency and security of employees it also about them believing and trusting the company they work for. By providing support and the feeling of unity, the service is investing in its long-term relationships with its core officers.

In those situations where we’ve managed crises in a proper way, we had employees being very grateful to the company. When my coworkers receive support and help a very strong relationship emerges out of it between the coworker and the company, of

course under the condition that the crisis has been managed in a good way. (P1)

When P1 was asked what the Service wants to achieve when communicating internally in crisis, the response was “*Credibility is really important. Credibility and respect. If you have these you will get loyalty.*” This response is in relation to what Dick and Basu (1994) claim that this strategy implies that communicative actions represent a behavioral outcome of loyalty. In addition, this internal crisis communication strategy generates trust, the sense of belongingness and increases productivity among internal stakeholders. Refusal to apply this particular strategy can be very destructive and according to P1 “*It takes a long time to rebuild the trust and the faith in the Service*”. Participants identify these internal crisis communication strategies as most used in their practice. Majority of participants identified cognitive objectives aimed at creating realistic expectations in employees and increasing their sense of security. Content related, participants identified factual aspect to be the most present. Activation of behaviours, third strategy that implies harmony between the content and the objectives just like two previous ones as specified by Mazzei and Ravazzani has not been identified during analysis of collected data. One of the reasons that explain its absence from the practice of communication professionals is its complexity.

When there is no harmony between the content and the objectives, the Service pursue strategies characterized with the inconsistency of aforementioned elements. In those cases trust, loyalty, credibility, image and reputation and relationship between officer, prisoners and the Service is in danger. Two strategies mirror this inconsistency: evasion and underutilization. It should be noted that neither of these strategies are fully adopted and implemented by any of the companies where respondents work. It is better to say that they are partially present in specific project or activities sometimes, purposefully or unconsciously used.

There are plenty of small incidents that take place every year and that we do not go proactively out there and talk about it internally. (P3)

Another participant said

Management and officers became very worried. Many figured out that they did the same mistake. So therefore, I believe that to some extent there was a certain level of uncertainty over this, especially among management. I believe that there was also anger since they were unknowingly making the same mistake, deepening the crisis but not being corrected. (P1)

Decision not to communicate internally as seen here is a matter of choice and is made consciously. participants are also conscious about the potential consequences but still make the choice not to communicate with their colleagues.

Yes, sometimes we don't communicate. Sometimes we want to evade public interest. Sometimes we do business with public authorities and feel that we do not need to communicate that in a broader sense with others, it is not necessary. But we are aware that crisis can arise from these situations. (P2)

According to some of the participants, the Service engaged in the study prefer selective implementation of underutilization of internal communication and evasion as revealed in the theoretical background (Barrett 2002, Coombs 2010).

4.2.5. Internal is new external

To get the same story to everybody. The story should be based on facts and truth. (P1)

We try to minimise or eliminate the word of mouth, rumors. (P2)

Expose yourself before, by doing so you have a control over what you are saying, be honest, be proactive. (P3).

By the means of careful analysis of these statements, the following elements can be detected: transparency and truthfulness, evasion of rumors and finally control and proactivity. All three statements are related to internal crisis communication but if one wouldn't know that one could be easily relating these to external crisis communication as well. Almost all participants share the same opinion and attitude that the same

information shared externally should be shared internally as well and vice versa.

Difference lies in order one chooses to do this.

We do say that everything that is communicated externally should always be communicated internally first. We want our staff and employees to know a little bit more and a little bit before everyone else. (P1)

Same practice is mentioned by another respondent “*Part of our polity is to inform the employees before the external public whenever that is possible*” (Participant 2). This is not only a wishful thinking but a part of everyday job routine for majority of the participants.

Sometimes I think that we should not have both website and intranet but one page that is both internal and external. I usually use same communication and same content both internally and externally. It is a thin line. (P3)

All different stakeholder deserves the same things, they deserve honest, timely, clear, prompt etc. information. It is the format, channels and prioritizing that one uses to make a difference and distinction in a such a blurred environment. P3 is another communication professional that shares previously uttered opinions but it is the format that makes it possible to differentiate between internal and external.

What we have is a written story, a single narrative but we don't tell the whole story to everybody. You use pieces of this story to different target groups (...) if you have the story and everybody communicating has the same story (...) you will be saying the same things. (P3)

Be it a single narrative, press release, Q&A or some other form how one shares its content the aim of crisis communication is still more or less the same “...to go back to normal working conditions as soon as possible” (P2). Choosing between format, channel or priority when communicating in crisis seems to be an undefined matter for companies. Often when it comes to form and channel it is the individual communications professional who decides over one or the other. Prioritizing

communication again is individual act that is highly dependent upon company's overall goals and strategies. In order to understand how organizations, manage crisis events, a set of open-ended questions related only to crisis communication plan were posed to participants. All 3 respondents acknowledge the use of crisis communication plan.

The Service had a components or fragments addressing the internal dimension of internal crisis communication. Additionally, more than a half had a specific person or crisis management team appointed. It is evident that within these teams two persons are regular members, communication professional and the Director-General. Communication professionals belonging to these teams generally are in charge both for external and internal dimension of communication. Having a crisis plan is related to the use of intranet, mail, telephone, SMS and meetings as internal communication tool. Only few listed the use of specific internal communication channels other than listed. *“We use some apps like WhatsApp to communicate internally in crisis”* (P1). Majority of participants claim that having a crisis communication plan enables them to prevent the crisis but it is revision and updating of crisis communication plans that are listed as factors of crucial importance for further improvement.

Nevertheless, less than a half of participants revises and updates these plans on a regular basis. This can be related to the longer periods of absence of crisis.

If you haven't been through a crisis for a long time than you generally postpone this till tomorrow. I need to update our (crisis communication plan) but it is not something that needs to be done immediately so I'll do it tomorrow. Twice a year at least you need to sit down and go through your crisis communication plan. I myself do not do it but I know I should. (P3)

There is an indication that organizations, regardless public or private, encountering “common” types of crisis revise and update their crisis communication plans more regularly. All the participants listed crisis communication plan as their tool to manage crisis but they differ in form they prefer to use and the content of it. This

difference partially mirrors different understanding of crisis among different respondents and their respective companies.

Our communication plan is extremely specific. The more specific any crisis communication document the better I would say. When crisis hits, you don't have time to think, you need an action point, a check list. Actually, we have a very specific check list. Get the information right, get the message right. Make sure that there is press release sent out to these addresses. Keep a logbook. (P1)

Understanding crisis beyond written protocols and definitions makes organizational learning, even performance improvement possible during the time of crisis possible. This particular theoretical finding is manifested within the following quote:

It is when the crisis strikes that you learn, when you try your systems and see what is functioning or not and then you can improve after that. It is hard to say this and this are going to happen. There is always a bit of act in the moment, you have to adapt to what is happening (P3).

Perhaps most characteristic feature related to broad meaning-oriented understanding of crisis is improvisation. Just like the rest of respondents this one confirmed to have a communication plan but in a broader meaning communication plan is only there to pinpoint specific activities rather than to provide a manuscript for any crisis. Different organizations will go through crisis in a different way due to different understanding and actions resulting out of that.

4.2.6. Social media and communication during and after crisis

According to P3 social media was used actively providing frequent updates on Facebook and through press releases. All information that was going to be posted had to be approved by the director of public affairs. P2 explained:

"..., it's up to me to formulate the message to use in the media internally, and on all of our platforms."

When asked about the challenges concerning media handling during a crisis, P2 answered that every incident is different and lack of routines can be challenging because an organization needs to be aware that a crisis can escalate quickly. P2 added that it is crucial to act right away when a crisis arises otherwise it will create a “lag” in the system and slow down the communication flow. P2 was asked to tell about the opportunities of using social media during the crisis. P2 responded:

“Well, it's all about being quick and becoming a primary source of information regarding the event which is easy and beneficial when you can use social media.”

Communicating with the public during the crisis was very important according to P2. P3 commented that frequent communication was significant and it made people feel calmer. However, participants saw the importance of social media during a crisis considering minimizing reputational damage because one can share simplified and precise messages simultaneously on several channels. P2 experienced social media as a tool that helps to get the information out in the early stage of a crisis and added: *“Social media is crucial in creating the impression that we are in control of the situation.”*

4.2.6.1. Social Media and communication after a crisis

When asked how important it was to communicate with the public after a crisis, the participants had slightly different responses. P2 didn't see the importance of communicating after a crisis, as long as it did not affect the Service anymore. While P3 mentioned that it is very important in order to make people feel safe as they are the industry operating with people's safety. P2 experienced the communication on social media after the crisis as exhausting at times because when the crisis is averted the journalists and the press started digging for more information. This particular crisis had to do with the overcrowding situation at Ankaful Prisons. We had to use all means to ensure that the journalists do not go beyond the issue at hand. P3 explained that as a

Service, they cannot go into discussions on social media and the Service has to stick to its original message. When asked if the Service always take any corrective measures to prevent the same type of crisis in the future, P3 said

“It is important to work together as a team in one organization but also cooperate with other organizations. To stay united and take responsibility.”

According to P2, the feedback from the public was mixed, but after developing a media report and going through all the feedback they concluded that only a few critical questions were unanswered. Social media channels were chosen as respondent’s preferred channel of communication. This finding is affirmed with a study on the use of social media as a crisis communication tool conducted by Heradstveit and Hagen (2011) in three oil and gas companies in America. The study found that information flow on social media is faster. It also has a wider coverage and helps in establishing good stakeholder relationships since it provides two-way communication. Although the social media platform, WhatsApp, is not officially accepted as a means of communication in the organization, the study finding suggested that it is still used in an informal way to disseminate and share information among employees. Social media is preferred by respondents because communication through it is prompt, consistent, easily accessible and enhances effective communication.

4.2.6.2. Personal experiences

P2’s personal experience of a crisis was when news broke that Medikal and Shatta Wale was going to be sent to Ankaful Prison. According to him, there was intense media pressure. Journalists would call 24/7, which made it overwhelming.

P2: “You get a bad relationship with your phone because you are so sick of it ringing all the time which also affects your personal life.”

To ease the media pressure, we had to issue a statement to that effect that the two celebrities will be treated the same way as the other inmates and also put out two other lines for verification. These lines were situated at the Prison Headquarters in Accra and this was very helpful. In P3's experience one needed to have a clear plan on what and how to convey a particular message, whether it's in the press or on social media. Both participants agreed that it is easier to convey the message when they firstly show compassion to those who are affected and that kindness and sympathy can go a long way. P3 also pointed out that this particular crisis facilitated an opportunity to prove they could provide the same quality service to everyone under their care.

4.2.7. Challenges of the role of public relations in strategic crisis communication

All participants stated that corporate culture has been the most challenging barrier in front of crisis communication. They stressed, "We suffer from lack of information, few numbers of communication specialists, weak internal communication and the misunderstanding of PR role". They explained that the culture of proactive communication planning is still limited in the Ghana Prison Service.

The management thinks that planning is costly and don't understand the importance of planning, especially that we have many situations to deal with. In fact, there's a lack of understanding of PR role in crisis management and unclear crisis communication strategies. (P.3)

Some participants noted that routine procedures in the Service are one of the key challenges in front of crisis communication. They argued, "We need cooperation between all the departments in Ghana Prison Service. Some should not be working in isolation. Moreover, several participants highlighted the challenge of the limited role of the directorate of public affairs in decision making. The PR's role is to execute the commands coming from the top-management". Some participants stressed that public relations suffer from "marginalisation in its function" and "the negative stereotype and

lack of credibility of PR in crisis communication”. Besides, another participant in claimed, “Management still doesn't understand the role of PR and marginalised it to a secondary, limited role in the Service”. Furthermore, most of the participants explained that technology is one of the recent challenges of effective crisis communication at Ghana prison Service. A participant said: “*More training is needed to cope with communication technology*”. Some participants stressed the timing challenge when the crisis occurred:

It's challenging to publish the news from our perspective before others add rumours to the news. The challenge is to make strategic decision under the pressure of crisis. (P2)

Effective crisis management handles the three threats successively. The primary concern in a crisis has to be public safety as a failure to address this intensifies the damage from a crisis. Reputation and financial concerns are considered after public safety has been remedied. Ultimately, crisis management is designed to protect an organization and its stakeholders from threats and reduce the impact felt by threats. Crisis management is a process designed to prevent or lessen the damage a crisis can inflict on an organization and its stakeholders. The biggest change for crisis management is the revolution of social media. During a crisis, it's a threat to organizations as it allows the public to spread information much faster and to a wider audience. According to Bergman (1994), Coombs (1998), and Sturges (1994), the SCCT attempts to explain the type of information that instructs stakeholders what to do to protect themselves from the crisis, the basics of what happened, and what the organization is doing to fix the situation and to prevent a recurrence of the problem. For any crisis, compassion should be the primary response strategy that organizations contemplate when the source of the crisis is uncertain. The public can voice their

opinions, propagate rumours and experiences in a highly visible manner (Coombs, 2004).

4.3. RQ3: What are the challenges that affected the effective implementation of a crisis communication plan in Kumasi Central Prison during the riot?

The best, most brilliant public relations strategy will not make up for making a poor operational decision and poor communication can make a bad situation worse. However, when poor operational decisions are made, a good communication strategy can help to minimize further damage and aid recovery. Looking at crises in terms of situations or turning points helps explain why the actions police departments take and the words spoken matter so much. The focus of the third research objective was on what challenges affect the implementation of a crisis communication plan in the Service.

4.3.1. Challenges in the implementation of a communication plan

Crisis situations create a challenging environment. Top-down communication from experts to lay audiences is unlikely to achieve behavioural compliance unless experts enjoy high levels of trust and credibility (Löfstedt 2005; Van der Linden and Löfstedt 2019) and are ready to engage in complex, time-consuming and expensive processes (Downs 2014). Institutional actors often follow a ‘public deficit’ model that sees the audience as the source of the problem – to be convinced with even more top-down persuasion. Challenges associated with developing and implementing crisis communication plans at the Ghana Prison Service is largely associated with budget cuts and reduction in staffing due to difficult economic times. According to P3

This can result in ineffective crisis management systems that lack resources necessary for adequate implementation.

As a crisis management team iterates through the communication steps of observation, interpretation, choice, and dissemination, common communication

challenges were repeatedly noted by interview participants. Interviewees consistently highlighted problems related to a lack of accurate, timely information about ongoing crisis activities at the center of the crisis. In some cases, interviewees expressed a need for tools such as a camera to observe ongoing activities; in other instances, the situation demanded the need for human investigators present and communicating to others with regard to the triggering event and its consequences. Another challenge that the participants unanimously agreed on is the inability to use normal channels of communication. According to P1, “*an inevitable tension occurs between the need to “act” and the need to gather additional information*”. This finding is supported by the work of Miller and Engemann (2004), who cited that a key crisis response task is determining and identifying truths, half-truths, and confusing or contradictory information.

Personal, professional, and organizational culture and values plays a significant role in evaluating the credibility of the data, reconstructing the data, and providing the degree of shared meaning concerning the data, according to the participants. Two common communication challenges faced during a crisis at the Ghana Prison Service are lack of time to evaluate and choose alternatives and inadequate communication filters. It was found through the interviews that a severe lack of time for a crisis management team to evaluate the potential consequences of, and choose, action alternatives. P3 stated that “*filters prohibit some communication from progressing while altering the form or content of other messages*”. However, if based on accurate, rich organizational memory and situational understanding, filters can be a highly effective way of allowing communicators to focus only on those points salient to the critical issues at hand. Unfortunately, filtering also involves risk. Furthermore, a

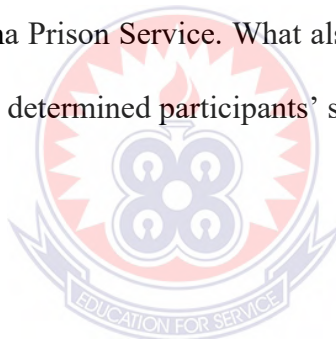
commonly experienced crisis dissemination communication challenge is the failure to design dissemination messages to meet the needs of the intended audience.

The 3 participants said it is difficult to obtain complete and true information concerning the crisis is a major challenge. This challenge in turn creates fear to communicate effectively with the public. Two of the interviewees (2 and 3) highlighted poor internal communication culture as a challenge in the management of crisis through communication. If their communication is not very good, the departments do not cooperate well. Two of the interviewees (1 and 3) stated that degree in which communication flows between different organizational levels impact crisis management. How well an organization is managed usually dictates how well they manage crisis situations. The finding illustrates the assertion of Ampofo-Bekoe (2014) that, using channels that are easily accessible to employees is the most effective communicating channel within an organization. It is the leader that initiates internal communication, sets in motion the rest of the management to manage the crisis. At the same time one of the key and most highlighted antecedents of internal crisis communication is leadership. Both theoretical and practical findings and manifestation display successful organization to be the product of good leadership and the capacity of leaders to make pragmatic decisions in the time of chaos (Heide, 2013). It is the leader's ability to drive employees to engage into organizational sensemaking that is important and can make a difference when in crisis (Wooten & James 2004). Ulmer for example states that having a leader involved in pre-crisis stage is of crucial importance since it involves leader's ability to communicate and scan for warning signals. Reason to involve the leader into acute phase is to mitigate the damage and lessen the severity of the damage using crisis response strategies (Coombs & Holladay 2002). Finally, it is

the leader who needs to urge employees on organizational learning as well as lessons from the crisis in its final post crisis phase (Wooten & James, 2008).

4.4. Chapter summary

This chapter presented the analysis, interpretation and discussion of results. This was done in league with the research objectives and was followed up with the discussion of the key findings supported with relevant available literature. The researcher found out that routine task of the communication team; news release approval procedures; role of the communications officers during and after crisis; organizational culture shaping the internal crisis communication; crisis coordination; leadership styles; importance of having crisis communication plan influence crisis communication in the Ghana Prison Service. What also emerged from the study is that all the variables moderately determined participants' status of career indecision.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0. Introduction

Chapter five is composed of an overview of the study, a summary of the various findings of the study. Again, the final chapter deals with the recommendations based on the key findings as well as suggestions for further research.

5.1. Summary

Assessing the effective role of communication during crises in the Ghana Prison Service aimed at identifying the role communication plays during the various stages of crisis management at the Ghana Prison Service; determining the factors that affect the implementation of effective communication in crisis management at Ghana Prison Services and finding out what challenges affect the implementation of a crisis communication plan in the Service after realizing that communication plays an integral part in crisis planning, response and resolution. The research design that was employed for this study was an exploratory qualitative design and an interpretive approach was used for this research because it offered helpful strategies for collecting, managing, and analyzing the qualitative data as far as the role of communication during crises in the Ghana Prison Service is concerned.

The study made use of purposive sampling technique to select the sample. This technique used to draw the sample from population whom are close to reach, readily available for the study or convenient to talk with while the purposive sampling was used to choose the population based on their “expertise” of the phenomenon being studied. A total of three (3) respondents were selected for the study. Recruitment of

participants was based on the availability and willingness of the practitioners to participate.

A semi-structured interview guide was used as the research instrument for this study which provided a more realistic view on crisis communication practices at Ghana Prison Service. The interviews offered more in-depth insight into the thoughts and emotions of the respondents regarding. The various ethical issues laid down by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of UEW were strictly complied with. The interpretivist nature of this research requires a balance in interpretation of data analysis that includes the researcher's knowledge and interpretation of the data as well as the respondents' own interpretation. Therefore, Thematic analysis in organizational communication is used to interpret data. The specific procedure for identifying themes was based on Owen's (1985) thematic analysis. This allowed for validity and making sense of constructs. Themes from the transcripts were detected and interpreted based on what was being said by the participants and what was understood by me, as a researcher and based on my past knowledge and experiences.

5.2. Crisis communication at Kumasi Central Prison

Crisis planning is an essential component of any organization's communication strategy. In the case of a prison system, it is critical. When prison officials learned about the so-called riot due to the water shortage, the crisis plan was engaged. The case study of Kumasi Central Prison showed that truth, assessment and poise are relevant in dealing with a crisis. The facts must be presented as they are and the measure put in place to mitigate the crisis assessed and addressed appropriately. Communication therefore plays a major role in curtailing a crisis situation. Organizations cannot wait until an emergency strike to develop relationships with the media. While not all firms have large communication staffs, or even any in house communications specialists, they

cannot avoid this necessity. Organizations must develop at least some familiarity with the media and offer opportunities for the media to get to know them, well in advance of an emergency. It was in light of this that the Public Relations Officer was chosen to conduct the majority of media briefings during the crisis. Correcting errors, dispelling myths and rumors is an essential component of successful crisis management and that was the exact thing the communication team did.

5.3. Conclusions

The following conclusions were made in relation to the findings of the study. Crisis management allows for renewal, stability, and growth after crisis situations, increases stakeholder confidence, protects the organization's assets and helps it meet insurance, legal and regulatory requirements, and avoids serious harm to stakeholders, losses for an organization, or end its very existence. Also, crisis situations create a challenging environment. Top-down communication from experts to lay audiences is unlikely to achieve behavioural compliance unless experts enjoy high levels of trust and credibility.

Crisis communication between crisis teams, managers and the organization's management plays an important role. Furthermore, organizations that want to improve their crisis management must change their behavior with respect to relationships with other organizations and build a common understanding of the situation and of the contribution of other organizations in crisis response. It was also concluded that fear and uncertainty, contradicting messages and inadequate resources are the crucial challenges in crisis communication in the Ghana Prison Service.

5.4. Recommendations

The study revealed that when crisis eventually occur in an organization, consistent and persistent communication becomes the Ghana Prison Service's top priority. Depending on the exact nature of the crisis at hand, the crisis management team determines how much detail is appropriate for different stakeholder groups to know. It is therefore recommended that management should take it upon itself to communicate and sensitize its stakeholders on matters related to crisis management. It would be in the interest of the institution if the stakeholders know the institution's spokesperson, and who comprises the crisis management team.

The findings revealed that in managing crisis various channels of communication are deployed. Selecting appropriate spokespersons to communicate with the public during and after a crisis is a strategic decision that can have far reaching results. It is recommended that managers need to understand the role of technology on the performance of public relations in crisis communication and response. This will ensure that they acquire latest technology like modern cameras and the use of internet that will boost their public relations and help in disseminating information to the publics.

The Ghana Prion Services' crisis communication channels are the same as its Internal Communication channels. Departmental meetings, durbars and the intranet system are the most effective channels to communicate crisis prevention and response messages to staff because they ensure two-way communication and enhance interaction between all staff and a single response is formulated in order the media gets to know about the crisis situation. It is recommended that the internal communications channels be decoupled for the external channels. Case scenarios can be simulated to know how to

communicate effectively to the publics without using the internal communication channels.

The study revealed that corporate culture has been the most challenging barrier in front of crisis communication. Participants stressed that they suffer from lack of information, few numbers of communication specialists, weak internal communication and the misunderstanding of PR role”. The study sample recommended that the PR office should be more visible in matters pertaining to public relations, crisis management matters. Also, a communication manual should be developed for the Service and the bureaucratic nature of top-to down communication channels be critically looked at to avoid media speculations.

5.5. Suggestions for future research

The study was conducted in the Prison Service only. It is therefore suggested that the study be carried out in other security services to allow a better generalization to be made. Also, the researcher suggests that a follow up study is conducted using a multiple case study design to draw the similarities and differences in the way this phenomenon is practised by other institutions. Moreover, further research can be conducted using the quantitative approach to also expand the sample to participants to include the experiences of diverse participants

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