INFLUENCE OF COVID-19 CRISIS COMMUNICATION ON PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE KENYAN GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION STRATEGY: A CASE OF KIBRA SUB-COUNTY NAIROBI, KENYA

BY

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30/5/2022

DECLARATION

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my son Jovanni Juma, my lovely wife Irene Juma and Albert Baker Fund (ABF). Thank you all for the life lessons and for teaching me what true communication means.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

COVID-19: Corona Disease virus 2019 is a disease that affects the respiratory system (Ogola, 2020).

Public Perception: a manifestation of views held by a group of people on a subject or on something and various sociocultural elements coloring it (Jervis, 2017).

Mobile Text Messages: These messages in form of texts also known as short message services (SMS) sent via cell phone devices for prevention of the adverse effects of COVID-19 (Wong et al., 2020).

Crisis Communication: according to Coombs (2017), crisis communication is defined as processes and strategies that are used to lessen the adverse effects of a threat before, during and after it has happened.

Artistic Expressions: forms of creative techniques such as music and murals/wall paintings that are used to send forth COVID-19 messages to reduce its adverse effects. Artistic expressions aid communication from a far. It thus generates positive appreciation by amplifying important voices and messages (Thompson et al., 2020).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AU-African Union

COVID-19- Corona Virus Disease of 2019

CDC-Centre for Disease Control

GoK- Government of Kenya

SMS-Short Message Services

WHO- World Health Organization

ABSTRACT

COVID-19 communication has drawn a sharp focus across the globe and elicited varied public perceptions. This study sought to assess the influence of covid-19 crisis communication on public perception of the Kenyan government's communication strategy from March 2020 to December 2020. Objectives were: to assess how the government's daily speeches influenced the public interpretation of the COVID-19 crisis, find out how the government's mobile text messages on COVID-19 influenced the public's trust in COVID-19 messages, and establish how the artistic expressions influenced the public response to the crisis. The rationale was based on assessing the public perception of G.o. K's communication strategy. The findings would help communication experts improve the existing crisis communication strategies. It was limited to Lindi ward. The study used SCT and SCCT theories to understand perception. It adopted a survey design to collect quantitative data involving123 household heads sampled purposively in Lindi, Kibra. The data was analyzed and presented in tables. The participants' mean age was 30.54. Averagely, 1% of the respondents disagreed with questions regarding COVID-19 daily speeches, 8.5% indicated neutrality, and 90.5% agreed with the statements. 33.4% disagreed with statements regarding text messages, 23.7% indicated neutrality, and 42.7% agreed with the statements. 7.1% disagreed with statements regarding artistic expressions, 21.9% indicated neutrality, and 70.5% agreed. The study concluded that the public's perceptions of government communication strategy regarding the COVID-19 crisis were favorable despite a significant percentage of the respondents disagreeing with statements on text messages/SMSs. The study recommends investigating the impact of the centralization of Kenyan government communication departments on crisis communication, the relationship between literacy and information sharing, and how people derive a common understanding of an artistic expression.

Keywords: *Crisis Communication, Public Perception, Communication Strategy.*

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Undoubtedly, communication plays an essential role during a crisis. Scholars suggest that the public's perception and willingness to comply with the government's directives during a crisis depends on the message's credibility and believability (Choi et al., 2015). Positive perception and message acceptability correlate with the public's willingness to assume the proposed protective behaviours during a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter presents the study's background, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, the significance of the study, study scope, limitations, delimitations, and assumptions.

1.2 Background of the Study

Global concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic are on the rise. Governments work tirelessly to sensitise their public on the best response practices to avert their citizens' possibilities of succumbing to the pandemic's adverse effects (Radlovacki, 2020). Amidst the governments' efforts, confusion, misinformation, rumours, and distrust reign. However, governments may have different experiences in the crisis and varying damage magnitude, which may considerably alter the public's perception of the crisis and the government's communication. Depending on the factors that exponentially increase the risk and damages associated with the crisis, it is paramount for any government to have an effective communication strategy that the public can trust. According to Ulmer et al. (2010), a crisis is any situation to harm or threaten people or property, interrupt business, or damage reputation. Crisis communication is a critical function of any government today. The role of crisis communication is to inform the public of desired actions that help in prevention and recovery measures.

Since its emergence in Wuhan, China, in 2019, COVID-19 (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2) has heavily impacted the lives of many communities and society. The global economy has not been spared too. Between December 2019 and June 30, 2020, 188 countries and territories reported numbers exceeding 10 million COVID-19 cases (Fu et al., 2020). The registered number of deaths attributed to the covid-19 VIRUS was 505,000, which

was still rising. In order to contain the pandemic's rapid spread, the Chinese government, among others, imposed movement restrictions and closure of learning and social facilities and went ahead to issue stay-at-home orders, in addition to shutting down worship facilities (Meijer & Webster, 2020).

Additionally, the governments sanctioned wearing masks, washing hands, and physical distancing to de-escalate the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is paramount to note that public communication strategies facilitate adherence to the government's directives and behaviour change recommendations (Lazarus et al., 2020). Notably, Lee and Jin (2019) expressed that the Chinese government improved its command, decision-making, organisation, and collaboration because of strategic crisis communication with its citizens. The Chinese government's action pointed out the positive input of communication in times of pandemic.

COVID-19 communication in China showed that public evaluation of the government's communication performance was hinged on trust. According to Bian et al. (2021), an increase in perception of the government's action was directly proportional to public trust. Therefore, in their recommendation, Bian et al. Stated that public emotions and risk perception ought to be considered in crisis communication. On the other hand, a study by Túri et al. (2022) in the Eastern Europe region (Romania) found that the government was unable to implement timely and adequate measures because of its inability to communicate government measures. The United States (US) was also one of the most affected countries in the world. According to the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the US government recorded 27 669,556 cases and 489,067 deaths as of February 17, 2021 (Bialek et al., 2020). The Trump administration's communication strategy regarding the virus was a continuous subject of discussion. Critics pointed out that the government would have saved many lives had it taken a more coordinated response. There was a need for clear communication, a skill Rutledge (2020) argues was deficient in President Donald Trump's public speeches.

In Africa, public distrust of the authorities was found to hinge on people's experience with the communication emanating from the government; thus, the public tended to ignore information from the administration (Seytre, 2020). Accordingly, COVID-19 communication messages in

15 West African countries were found to be unsubstantiated, thus exacerbating information uncertainty (Moonasar et al., 2021). For example, Seytre states that several communication tools carried messages relating COVID-19 risk to animal contact. The messages' content included urging people to desist from eating raw meat and washing their hands whenever they came into contact with an animal, even before establishing the actual cause and nature of the disease's transmission. Such messages highlighted the level of misinformation that Seytre argues would yield reluctance to abide by the proposed containment measures.

Additionally, the study cited a communication gap in the packaging of critical information on COVID-19 to the public. It suggested that mistrust and hostility, as witnessed in the previous Ebola epidemic, could have characterised COVID-19 communication; therefore, there was a need to review and revise communication messages in Sub-Saharan Africa. Cultural beliefs and religion were critical in shaping how the public perceived the pandemic and the overall COVID-19 response. According to Nche (2022), religious groups hesitated to comply with the government's COVID-19 containment measures. Many religious groups were reluctant to follow the government's proposed safety measures. The findings attributed noncompliance to doubt and distrust of the government's communication and management of the pandemic, alongside believing in God as the sole healer and protector.

Similarly, a study by Chilanga et al. (2022) in Malawi established that religious beliefs and the political environment greatly influenced the public perception of contracting COVID-19. Additionally, the study suggested that religious ideologies were vital in determining the community's response to pandemics and consequently proved detrimental to effective pandemic control. However, Alexander (2020), in a study in Uganda, found that religion played a critical role in mobilising citizens to follow the government's directives on COVID-19.

Kenya reported its first COVID-19 case on March 2019 through the Kenya Ministry of Health (Makachia, 2020). The Kenyan government developed a crisis communication strategy that involves daily briefing through the mainstream media (television and radio), text messaging (short message services), and communication via artistic expressions such as songs and murals.

It enabled the government to communicate to the public and issue briefs concerning new infections, COVID-19 recoveries, and de-escalation measures. The communications were carried out through the cabinet secretary of health. The role of crisis communication, in this case, was to provide information about the crisis and strategically gather and disseminate new information consistently and as quickly as possible (Murugi & Mberia, 2019). The COVID-19 crisis was and remained a threat to Kenya's social and economic status. It had far-reaching consequences, which were inevitable. Therefore, effective crisis communication stepped in the gap to give hope and enhance public trust by provoking a positive response, as suggested by Coombs (2017).

Notably, Kenya has had several crises in the last twenty years, including health and other crises. Among these crises is the aflatoxin outbreak in 2004 in Makueni District, which resulted in 125 deaths (Tan, 2020). Also, within greater sub-Saharan Africa, the country has had 15 cholera outbreaks from 1971-2010, mainly affecting the population living within the informal settlements of Nairobi (Kigen et al., 2020). The country experienced the 2012 Al-Shabaab retaliatory attacks, the 2013 Westgate Shopping Mall shooting, the 2014 Mpeketoni attacks, and the 2015 Garissa University attacks (Muna, 2017). Also, the country experienced the 2019 Nairobi Dusit attack, the 2019 Likoni ferry tragedy, and now the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. These two sets of crises have been handled at different communication levels. The health ministry handles health crises through the health minister (now known as the Health Cabinet Secretary) as the spokesperson, and government-appointed spokespersons handle other non-health-related crises. According to Owino (2022), the government's communicators and communication teams are not centralised but are uncoordinated and adhoc.

Owino further noted that the government's communication is partly strategic and partly political because spokespeople are appointed politically and may have or lack crisis communication knowledge.

According to Muchiri (2018), unlike in the past, the digital space impacts the government's communication in many ways. For example, the public can engage the government using government official Twitter handles and even the health ministry website for more information

about COVID-19. Multiple channels have yielded a democratic space where the public engages freely, creating a two-way communication approach to crisis communication where government officials engage with the public, unlike before (Makachia, 2020). The digital space and the media's evolution allow the government to apply various strategies to communicate effectively during a crisis (Murugi & Mberia, 2019).

Murugi and Mberia (2019), Choi et al. (2015), Hyland-Wood et al. (2020), Seytre (2020), Camacho and Glicksman (2021), Rutledge (2020), and Meijer and Webster (2020) all agree that communication strategy during the COVI-19 crisis needs to effectively address the public's communication needs to shape their response. This includes facilitating and managing information exchange. However, significant knowledge gaps remain regarding the public perception of crisis communication strategies during emergencies like infectious disease outbreaks (Lee & Jin, 2019). These knowledge gaps are critical to understanding the coronavirus experience and crisis communication.

1.3 Problem Statement

Factors such as message clarity, the effectiveness of the channel, trust and message regularity or consistency ultimately yield a two-way communication hence a favourable perception of the communication strategies employed (Camacho & Glicksman, 2021). The government's communication on the COVID-19 crisis has drawn mixed perceptions amongst the public due to the strategy used. These are compounded by misinformation and conspiracy theories around COVID-19 (Lee & Jin, 2019). As such, people are hesitant to comply with the government's COVID-19 containment measures, which can be problematised as an unfavourable perception of the government's communication. It is paramount to point out how the government's communication strategy is perceived during a health crisis and needs deeper assessment to establish its effectiveness. Amidst the government's continued use of different strategies to communicate and issue new information on the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a reluctance to comply with the COVID-19 containment measures because of the public's selection, organisation, interpretation, and understanding of the messages. Mistrust, doubts, and miscommunication further mediate it. Hyland-Wood et al. (2020) argued that public willingness to respond depends on how they have received, understood, and perceived the

information from their government. Government must communicate to the citizenry about their well-being, and a negative perception of the communication strategy may reinforce hesitancy to comply with the COVID-19 measures suggested. Therefore, the gap, as noted herein, underlies the need for a systematic way to understand the public's perception of the COVID-19 crisis-communication strategy used by the government of Kenya (GoK) from March to December 2020.

1.4 Research Objectives

The study sought to attain the following objectives;

1.4.1 General Objective

To assess the influence of covid-19 crisis communication on public perception of the Kenyan government communication strategy in the Kibra constituency from March to December 2020

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

1. To assess how the government's daily speeches on COVID-19 influenced the public interpretation of the crisis in Kibra Nairobi, Kenya.
2. To find out how the government's mobile text messages on COVID-19 influenced the public's trust in COVID-19 messages in Kibra Nairobi, Kenya.
3. To establish how the government-sponsored COVID-19 artistic expressions influenced the public response to the crisis in Kibra Nairobi, Kenya.

1.5 Research Questions

1. How did the government's speeches on COVID-19 influence public interpretation of the COVID-19 crisis in Kibra Nairobi, Kenya?
2. Did the mobile messages on COVID-19 influence public trust in COVID-19 messages in Kibra Nairobi, Kenya?
3. How did the government-sponsored artistic expressions influence the public response to COVID-19 crisis communication in Kibra Nairobi, Kenya

1.6 Rationale of the Study

Against the backdrop of COVID-19, it was paramount to establish what the public thinks about the government's speeches, mobile text messages, and artistic expressions used from March to

December 2020. Kenya's government needs to understand its public's role in realising the communication goals before settling on the strategy to use in crises. Therefore, policymakers must appreciate that communication goals are only attainable when the message is clearly understood, trusted, perceived positively, and acted upon. With the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, the world quickly shifts toward targeted communication. For this reason, the crisis response strategy considers audience analysis to understand their attitude, expectation, and perception of the message, the speaker, and the collaborators in information dissemination. In this study, the researcher underscored the importance of crisis communication in mitigating a public health crisis's adverse effects by appreciating stages that lead to perceptive tendencies. If the government can provide information to its public before a crisis, immediately during the crisis, and after the crisis occurs and the public feels satisfied by such communication response, then the objective of information sharing and mutual understanding becomes a reality. The opposite is also true. The study intended to assess the public's perception of the government's COVID-19 communication strategy between March and December 2020. How, for example, does the public perceive the government's speeches? What is the public's perception of mobile text messages? The study also assessed the public's perception of artistic expressions in communicating the COVID-19 crisis.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study was critical because it was meant to assess how the Kenyan public perceived COVID-19 communication strategy and give communication experts and scholars insight into the subject. The findings of this research are also crucial as it allows scholars to assess whether there is a need to adjust the strategy or maintain it in future crises.

1.7.1 The Ministry of Health

Even though the Ministry of Health in Kenya has an elaborate health crisis communication strategy, this study is critical because it highlights information about the public's thoughts and expectations as the COVID-19 crisis escalates. Consequently, the ministry now has a chance to tighten the crisis communication strategy aimed at sustaining trust, corporation, and desired action from the public by adopting only an effective strategy.

1.7.2 Government Policy Maker

Additionally, the researcher believes this study will help communication policymakers improve and redesign suitable policies on crisis communication strategy. Any government with an excellent crisis communication strategy can manage any crisis and its adverse effects, including achieving the desired response. Moreover, it will help the communication stakeholders understand how the public has perceived the COVID-19 crisis communication strategy.

1.8 Scope of the Study

This study was conducted in Nairobi County and targeted the residents of a ward in Kibra Sub County who depended on Kenya government briefings, text messages, and artistic expressions as their source of crisis communication during COVID-19 from March to December 2020. The literature scope was general and empirical reviews from recently published journals on COVID-19 crisis communication. This study employed a survey design as a methodology to gain insight into the perception of members of the target population about the Kenyan government's COVID-19 crisis communication. Data collection through questionnaires was done for three months (October to December 2021). The respondents were identified and provided questionnaires, which they filled out and returned accordingly.

1.9 Limitation and Delimitation of the Study

The researcher focused on assessing the perception of sampled households of Kibra's Nairobi Sub-county of the G.o. K's COVID-19 pandemic communication strategies from March to December 2020. Notably, it was grounded on the domains of crisis communication strategy and the three elements used by the government (Speeches, SMSs, and Artistic expressions). Also, there were financial constraints; however, this was surmountable because the study was restricted to the households of Kibera Sub County and not the entire city of Nairobi. This study was delimited to assess public perception of the government's COVID-19 crisis communication strategy. The study was restricted to questionnaires as the primary approach for data collection. It is also important to point out that the study only involved willing participants ready to volunteer in one of the wards in Kibra.

1.10 Assumption of the Study

The researcher assumed that the variables would remain constant throughout this study. The participants would be sincere in answering the questions correctly, and the sample chosen would represent the population. The study further assumed that the data collection instruments would be adequate to draw valid conclusions for this study, and the respondents' reachability and availability to fill the questionnaires was assumed to be achievable. Also, the conclusion and recommendations drawn from the study would generate positive decision-making by various stakeholders in improving public perception of communication strategies in times of crisis.

1.11 Summary of the Chapter

The chapter presented the study's background, where literature from various scholars globally, regionally, and locally depicted crisis communication. The chapter also gave the problem statement and outlined research objectives and questions. The chapter also discussed the study's significance, the study, the scope of the study, limitations, and delimitations, and the study's assumptions. The next chapter will review the literature based on scholarly works.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the study focuses on general and empirical literature and discusses a theoretical framework supporting the study. Notably, perception is defined as an essential concept of communication and reviews. The study looks into other global and regional studies to understand how various governments have communicated in crisis times, their strategies, and the public perception of such strategies (speeches, SMS, and artistic expressions) used in COVID-19communication.

2.2 Theoretical Review

Communication practitioners express that the absence of information yields misinformation and makes it news. In a crisis, a communication plan becomes a vital script followed to the end. It guides what is communicated, how it is communicated, who communicates, and where it is communicated. The communication stakeholders can disseminate information fast, but they can also reach the intended consumers of the message. Communication scholars posit that communication strategy helps governments share information and give appropriate guidance on the expected actions to limit the adverse effects of a crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2014).

As is synonymous with many governments, the communication or public relations department is similar to media relations. The effectiveness and efficiency of this department are aided by a crisis management plan (CMP) which gives guidance in a crisis (Ireland et al., 2012). More so, a crisis communication blueprint dictates who plays what role, the overall spokesperson, the indicators of the expected action, the people to be contacted, and procedures for documenting feedback or the public's response. According to Coombs and Holladay (2014), crisis communication and information sharing are critical for any government for relationship building. Therefore, the successful implementation of a crisis communication strategy implies providing the public with the necessary messages that can be acted upon.

The ultimate objective of crisis management is to aid an organisation in having a soft landing whenever faced with a crisis because it gives a solution-based actionable guide for reducing the effects of a crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2014). More importantly, the public deserves a relatable crisis communication that bears relevant messages which specifically address their concerns. In the case of the COVID-19 crisis, the government's image can be tainted when the wrong messages are sent to the wrong audience. What remains unverified and is assumed is that communication strategy involving the use of speeches, text messages, and artistic expressions disseminate information to every person seeking it and that the strategy reaches all homogeneous publics.

However, Tao et al. (2020) argue that the public is not homogeneous, and they do not receive the message simultaneously. Also, the public perceives information based on their message selection, organisation, and interpretation. They perceive information differently based on inherent or overt factors (Maxwell, 2010). For example, SMSs may not be received and interpreted equally by all audiences, just as much as some would not be persuaded by paintings or music. Some public members do not listen to speeches from the government based on the reason that is inherently known to them. However, it is paramount to point out that a good crisis communication strategy guides the information flow and dictates the desired response (Maxwell, 2010). In other words, a crisis communication team must appreciate the diversity of the audience and their varied expectations during a crisis.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The researcher has adopted source credibility theory (SCT) and situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) in this study.

2.3.1 Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

This theory suggests that how people understand and react to public crises is shaped mainly by their culture, personal knowledge, and level of interest in the issue. It also helps to explain the public behaviours about the crisis. Coombs used a structured framework for studying media coverage of crises that can influence public perceptions and respond to crisis events more effectively (Reisenzein & Rudolph, 2018). In the context of COVID-19 communication

strategies, this theory helps understand the audiences' information-seeking behaviours relating to the crisis. Specifically, Coombs introduced Social Mediated Crisis Communication Model (SMCC) as a theoretical framework for studying media coverage of crises and public responses to such events (Reisenzein & Rudolph, 2018). Dynamic perception is best explained by the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) because the theory gives a structural basis for anticipating and interpreting the response outcome.

2.3.1.1 The Social-Mediated Crisis Model

SMCC is a model that explains how networks, groups, and individuals communicate with each other using social media during a crisis. It builds on the public sphere model and situational crisis communication theory. It helps to comprehend how individuals utilise social media in different situations and crises, reacting to the events occurring (Lu & Jin, 2020). During the COVID-19 crisis, local officials or media can use SMCC to determine the public's social media platforms during and after the event (Coombs, 2017).

According to the public sphere model, the public sphere is made of two-three distinct zones: the interactive media zone, the audience zone, and the authority zone. The interactive media zone covers all kinds of electronic media used for communication, such as news outlets, social networks, blogs, and tweets (Lu & Jin, 2020). This sphere model is crucial in understanding SMS and artistic expressions during the COVID-19 crisis. The audience zone is made of individuals tuned into a story's coverage. These individuals learn about what is happening in an event or before/after an event happens. The authority zone is made of professionals who have the information to understand the crisis better, are trusted by the audience, and can be honest and speak with authority, therefore, underlying the use of speeches during a crisis (Lu et al., 2022).

2.3.2 The Source Credibility Theory

According to Seiler and Kucza (2017), Source credibility theory (SCT) describes the relationship between people's response to a communication message based on how they regard the source. In other words, the theory attributes behaviour change to successful communication from a credible source. Importantly how the public perceives a source becomes a premise upon

which they respond to a crisis. This theory further explains the characteristics of both the speaker and the message as important factors during communication. Therefore, one can interrogate the message's import, understand it, interpret it, and act based on who, how, and why it was communicated (Zhou & Ki, 2018).

2.3.3 Linking theories

SCT and SCCT as the premise for this study are paramount because the COVID-19 crisis has brought many communication challenges that must be urgently addressed. Consistency and urgency in communicating and providing up-to-date information cannot be understated. Amidst information influx from many quarters, including social media, it is paramount to examine the credibility perceptions and factors such as trust in government and message exposure, among others. Whereas SCT addresses credibility, SCCT will address trust as essential for fulfilling communication during a crisis.

2.4 The Concept of Perception

Amid any crisis, various public perceptions are likely to arise and eventually lead to miscommunication and sub-optimal outcomes (Kelso et al., 2018). Understanding public perception and the government's perception of its public in a communication process is paramount in meeting the communication objectives in times of crisis. In other words, the public perception of the government's communication during an emergency may lead to desired actions or vice versa.

Notably, the concept of perception is complex. It has several facets that need a deeper look to enhance its comprehension and how it correlates with the response or, in this case, behavioural changes. According to Coles and Hirschboeck (2020), the concept of perception is the process of creating awareness or understanding of sensory information as defined by psychologists. The word "perception" is connected to the Latin word "percipio," which means collecting or the action of taking possession and apprehension through our senses (Pauwels, 2018). Physiology examines perception based on its source, i.e., the neurons responsible for its enactment. In other words, perception is a product of a patient's expectations, beliefs, and attitudes.

2.4.1 Process of Perception

2.4.1.1 Selection

Jervis (2017) opines that we can only perceive part of the information presented to us despite our bombardment with loads of information each day and almost all the time. Therefore, selection is a critical stage in perception because, at this stage, we naturally convert the environmental stimuli into practical and meaningful experiences. The selection process relieves us from a possible information overload from many stimuli we encounter via our sensory organs simultaneously and waiting to be processed. The selection stage has attracted many scholarly views. Lohiniva et al. (2020) posit that human attention is limited only to the most meaningful and relevant situations or strangers to avoid information overload.

Furthermore, Roessler (2011) explains that noticing a scenario or an incident is equivalent to selection. They equate the selection stage to making a map where only the key indicators are included and not everything. The few inclusions in the map represent the entire idea. In addition, interest is a central factor when considering the stimuli to pay attention to because it is the basis for the selection stage. Humans tend to attend to salient information. Some of the information we pay attention to may be abstract or presentable, like concepts or concrete forms. The things attracting our attention can be abstract, like a concept, or concrete, like an object (Jervis, 2017).

2.4.1.2 Organisation

The organisation is the second stage of perception, where the formation of a meaningful pattern or arrangement of information consciously or subconsciously in a sequence takes place (Knowles, 2020). This stage is vital in making sense of information. The organisation stage is the categorisation stage because it is the point at which we classify things or information to give them shape. As we encounter physical and social events, we must organise them thematically through colour, size, texture, or appearance. Suppose one is asked to describe an elephant; their perspectives would vary as some may only talk of the size, others the trunk, and so on. Organisation is essential in structuring and coherence to one's knowledge concerning the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that affect life. Knowles (2020) argues that this stage helps

identify and assign characteristic actions. The two fundamental aspects of perception at the organisation stage include forming the perception structure and stabilising human perception.

2.4.1.3 Interpretation

After the selection and organisation stages, the stimuli must imply an explicit meaning. However, the meaning attached to the organised stimuli is subjective and may not commonly apply across communicators (Knowles, 2020). Cultural diversity and experience determine to a greater degree, the interpretation of stimuli and are usually the cause of conflict in communication. For instance, people may unanimously agree on an object's objective but differ at the individual level because of the uniqueness of the perceptual lens that influences the interpretation (Bornman & Puth, 2017).

Consequently, our experiences and backgrounds yield the attribution of divergent meanings to the same stimulus. Therefore, similar perceptions result from common meaning attribution in shared cultures or people's belief systems. In a communication setting, opinions may vary. The variation depends on the persuader or the communicator's authority, as explained by the SMCC model that attributes their role in times of crisis. Shared perception, therefore, presents a communicator with an opportunity to understand the meaning of a communication strategy accurately and smoothly (Bornman & Puth, 2017). This phenomenon is also explained by source credibility, a concept based on the belief that people are more likely to be accurate in their reactions and decisions when they rely on their internal perceptions of the source.

2.5 The Global Perspective of COVID-19 Crisis Communication

The COVID-19 pandemic is a significant global crisis, which is no longer a doubt given the statistics of morbidity and mortality caused by the virus (Gesser-Edelsburg et al., 2020). The adoption of stringent measures by the governments is a testament to the consequences the virus had socioeconomically. Some of these measures adopted by the government included total lockdown and restriction of movement of people and goods. Consequently, even the most developed countries were experiencing negative economic ramifications. For instance, The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (2020), an international body mandated with official global statistics, reported that the pandemic was impoverishing nearly

100 million people. It further pointed out that the first quarter of 2020 saw a global job loss of about 155 million full-time employees, which increased to 400 million in the second quarter of the same year (Fu et al., 2020). The COVID-19 crisis has significantly impacted communication globally in an unprecedented manner. The media place was unquestionably on top of covering the crisis and remained the channel between the government's crisis communication handlers and the public. People worldwide followed the pandemic coverage to a more significant deal than before, underscoring the media's undisputable influence (Radlovacki, 2020). This section shall examine the global communication strategy regarding the COVID-19 crisis.

The origin of COVID-19 is traceable to Wuhan, Hubei province in China, where the first virus patient was identified. The collection of three bronchoalveolar lavage samples from a patient with unknown pneumonia on December 30, 2019 (WHO, 2021) kick-started a chain of events leading to the declaration of the virus as a pandemic by WHO on March 11, 2020, and also current global interventions to contain it (Fu et al., 2020). As of February 16, 2021, the number of infections stood at 108 million, and 2.3 million deaths as reported (WHO, 2021).

From the first case of pneumonia of unknown aetiology and its detection in Wuhan, the government, through its agencies, launched a national emergency response. General Secretary Xi Jinping took control by directing and deploying various measures to curb the spread (including total restriction of movement of people in Hubei province) and further requested all government levels to place efforts to prevent the COVID-19 outbreak above other priorities. Senior government officials, led by Prime Minister Li Keqiang, went to Wuhan and across the country to inspect and coordinate multiple government agencies' prevention and control measures (WHO, 2021).

As of February 20, 2020, 75,465 cases were based on a national reporting system between National and Provincial Health Commissions (Tai & Sun, 2011). This national reporting system routinely provided newly recorded confirmed cases, contacts, deaths, and suspected cases. Moreover, each province gave daily briefings at 0300hr (Tai & Sun, 2011). However, the COVID-19 crisis communication in China was uncertain because the public perceived the

information as being driven by inconsistency, contradiction, and, sometimes, unverifiable (Lin et al., 2020). Although the government had employed measures to mitigate the spread of the virus and ease the concerns of the Chinese communities, limited knowledge about COVID-19 still existed.

Furthermore, Lin et al. (2020) noted that the uncertainty about the pandemic and its transmission mode contributed to disinformation among the citizens. Therefore, consistent communication and people's ability to trust and verify them could significantly influence their perceptions and behaviour. In other words, information certainty was vital for favourable perception. Also, Lin et al. (2020) argue that public distrust of the messenger(s), the message, and the source affected how people adopt the recommended COVID-19 crisis response behaviour. This response could be the case with China. They argue that clear, accurate, and timely communication is critical to the public before and during an outbreak.

By March 2020, all countries in Europe had recorded a coronavirus case. Radlovacki (2020) notes that European member states' response to the virus outbreak focused on public health, the transport system, the economy, research and innovation, crisis management, and education. The spread of the virus led to European states enforcing measures to prevent and control the disease, such as the closure of internal borders, restriction of movement of people, campaigning on the need for social distancing and wearing masks and other personal protective equipment, and quarantining.

2.5.2 COVID-19 Crisis Response in Africa

According to Osseni (2020), Africa recorded low prevalence and mortality rates than most Western countries and the USA. This success was attributed to the government's early preventive measures. Amidst limited health equipment and personal protective equipment, African governments were accelerating innovations to address health concerns associated with the COVID-19 crisis. In the advent of the disease, the AU specialised agency in charge of continental health security observed vigilance to ensure that the virus would have minimal effect on the continent. Furthermore, timely information concerning COVID-19's evolution became important as weekly virtual coordination meetings with Africa CDC and the

governments were held. After reporting the first disease cases in Africa, CDC mobilised a comprehensive response by organising an emergency meeting with the various health ministries. The meeting yielded the adoption of the Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19. According to Loembé et al. (2020), regional workshops were conducted to enhance the capacity of the AU and enable it to survey all the entry points, prevent infections, and improve risk communication.

Notably, some countries were slow in their COVID-19 pandemic approach in Africa while preparing for prevention and control measures. There were concerns among continents that there would be higher risks of COVID-19 spread because of poverty and weak health systems. However, Ogola (2020) best captures Africa's situation when he points out that the continent faced a double COVID-19 crisis caused by the pandemic and information-framing crises.

Ogola (2020) opines that the framing of the COVID-19 information was primarily political, with some governments' speeches on COVID-19 punctuated by denial, secrecy, and official misinformation. Alternative narratives were in circulation regarding the COVID-19 crisis, particularly online. Ogola (2020) acknowledges that public distrust following many years of official misinformation has undermined African governments' crisis messaging. Thus, questions arose regarding government data on cases and deaths in countries such as Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Nigeria. Therefore, such suspicion could affect the public perception of governments' communication strategies.

While the studies focused chiefly on crisis communication and timely delivery of COVID-19 information, most studies focusing on Africa's response failed to look at factors such as message clarity and regularity, which are essential in shaping people's perception, as argued by Coombs and Holladay (2014).

2.5.3 COVID-19 Crisis Response in Kenya

The first report on the COVID-19 virus in Kenya was in March 2020 (Makachia, 2020) through the Kenya Ministry of Health. The GoK developed a crisis communication strategy that involves daily briefings through the mass media, SMSs, and later awareness campaigns

through celebrities and artists (artistic expressions). The daily briefings and messaging enabled the government to communicate and issue briefings concerning new infections, COVID-19 recoveries, and de-escalation measures. According to Walker (2011), strategic crisis communication is crucial in whipping public trust and building relational commitment. With the widespread COVID-19 Pandemic in Kenya, people were seeking information; the government, in its approach, had adopted the issuance of daily speeches, sending text messaging through SSD *719 #; a call centre for improving the COVID-19 crisis communication between the government and the public members. By dialing **719#*, the public could receive short messages about the disease. Public information was also done through artistic expressions such as music and murals.

The inconsistency in complying with the government's COVID-19 de-escalation measures was still imminent and could be attributed to the public's perception of the entire strategy. The role of crisis communication was to provide information about the crisis and strategically gather and disseminate new information as quickly as possible and consistently (Makachia, 2020). Since the first case of COVID-19, the number of infections has been growing exponentially. Makachia stated that the COVID-19 crisis prevention protocol is in place; however, adherence to the protocols has remained elusive.

2.6 How the Government's Daily Speeches on COVID-19 Influences Public Interpretation of the Crisis

The COVID-19 crisis tested the communication efficiency of several leaders across the globe. McGuire et al. (2020) noted that in their speeches, the language that leaders used and the speech tone affected the interpretation of the message and its comprehension. Additionally, official speeches assured the public that the government was not only in control but had the public's best interest. Government speeches played an essential role in framing a shared reality, thus engendering sense-making, an aspect of perception. New Zealand is considered one of the countries that successfully managed community transmission by consistently informing its public (McGuire et al., 2020). The prime minister of New Zealand, Mr Arden, speeches were resolute and showed the government's decisiveness. The framing of the speeches and the messages' tone played an essential role in encouraging solidarity among the community and

directing their actions during the COVID-19 crisis. In the linguistic and discursive aspects of the Prime Minister's speeches, his messages were clear and had an empathetic tone. Thus, public trust grew significantly, and using direct messaging through other platforms also shaped positive perceptions of authenticity and the government's approachability (McGuire et al., 2020). As a result of speech acceptability, New Zealand's citizens adopted new behaviours that helped contain the disease. The study contends that the Prime Minister's communication skills may not be generalisable but shows how speeches could influence the crisis's initial stages.

In another study, Sjölander-Lindqvist et al. (2020) framed the problem and suggested solutions to the COVID-19 pandemic by different heads of state in Italy, Germany, Spain, and Sweden were examined.

The study analysed the speeches of Angela Merkel (Germany), President Mattarella and Prime Minister Conte (Italy), Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez (Spain), and Prime Minister Stefan Lofven (Sweden). Their findings illustrate the individual's conceptualisation as a central actor whose actions would be crucial in overcoming the COVID-19 crisis. Early interventions by the government and consistency in delivering COVID-19 speeches assured that the government was in control. Latin America and most countries declared a state of emergency, a humanitarian crisis, or a public health emergency and introduced several measures. Such measures included restrictions on international air travel, a ban on mass gatherings, preventive social isolation, regulation of non-essential activities that warrant travel, compulsory quarantines for foreign travelers, or nationwide lockdowns (Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2020). However, the government in these regions undertook to issue public speeches to reiterate the position and remind the public of the consequences of violating the guidelines.

Furthermore, Sjölander-Lindqvist et al. (2020) noted that the COVID-19 crisis communication in Brazil (Southern America) and Mexico were not rapid as was expected. Many factors, such as limited financing, corruption, and health officials' conflicting messages, were cited as barriers to effective communication. The Presidents of the countries mentioned above had also downplayed the importance of communicating the critical COVID-19 containment messages, including social distancing, restricted movement of people, and putting on face masks. Consequently, the two countries recorded a combined 12, 209,554 cases and 426,667 deaths

as of February 22, 2021 (Radlovacki, 2020). Because of the high figures recorded regarding COVID-19 infections, the public trust in the government's ability to protect the citizens waned significantly despite the daily briefings.

2.6.1 Source Credibility and the Impact of Spokespersons during a Crisis

According to research by Abu-Akel et al. (2021) on the effect of spokesperson attribution on public message sharing during the COVID-19 pandemic, urgency is essential in understanding the importance of speeches during a crisis. In the study, whose focus was on formulating the speech messages, content, and style, the speaker played an essential role in shaping public perception. The study reports that public figures could effectively promote social distancing due to their perceived influence and credibility. The government spokesperson on the COVID-19 crisis was also influential, followed by the celebrity spokesperson. A comparative study that investigated how speeches concerning the COVID-19 situation are presented in Swedish public news media compared to the Danish's presentation indicated that anxiety, apportionment of blame, and perception of care were central in sense-making.

Islam and Siddika (2020) established that public perception of the politicians' remarks on COVID-19 was unsatisfactory, and as such, politicians' comments attracted 80 per cent of respondents' disapproval. Some ministers' speeches on the COVID-19 crisis, such as the remark that Bangladesh is far more potent than COVID-19, were questionable. The public did not like such statements, and in effect, they were reluctant to respond to the government's communication. The Prime Minister's remark recorded low 1% approval by the public. The study concluded that the politicians' comments drew negative public perception compared to the health professionals' statements, thus highlighting the importance of source credibility in crisis communication.

Furthermore, Christensen and Lægreid (2020) conducted a content analysis study in Norway and found the following. First, the crisis communication speeches were punctuated by information clarity, timeliness, and reiteration of the messages; thus, the speeches informed public actions. This was because the speeches were delivered by leaders perceived as credible and experts in their field. Secondly, the citizens who responded to the government's directives

increased trust in the Norwegian government and the health authorities. The increase was recorded by the end of March 2020, when citizens' satisfaction had increased from 23% to 49%. The study suggests that a communication strategy that involved the political leaders, the administrative authorities, and all the professionals with a joint call was the reason for the increased trust and positive perception.

Additionally, leaders' credibility is essential in any crisis because people look up to people they can trust before taking any desired action. The study reinforces the findings by Bernard et al. (2021) in a study that examined the communication delivered over the first seven months of the COVID-19 pandemic by the Australian Prime minister. The findings indicate that the Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) guided all the speeches and information during the stated period with minimal adjustments, thus improving message clarity, conciseness, and consistency. The key themes of the CERC that characterised the message delivered by the prime minister included vital messages to the public, actions taken, and those the government would take to control the COVID-19 crisis. The study established that 83.5% of the messages touched on economic support and cabinet decisions regarding message framing. 68.13% of the frames referred to public health and medical help, commending other public health institutions and workers, and non-pharmaceutical advice.

2.6.2 Public Trust in Crisis Speeches

Mohamad et al. (2020) conducted a descriptive study in Malaysia. It sought to gauge the relationship between COVID-19 information sources and the attitude of the Malaysian public in the fight against the pandemic. According to the findings, the Malaysian Ministry of Health was preferred and trusted more than other information sources, with 95.1 % approval. Sources such as television and online news platforms had 73% and 64% ratings, respectively. Another COVID-19 information source that gained the least preference was family and friends (2%). Notably, the study looked at information source preference. It established that women aged 30-49 years were 1.6 times more likely to utilise social media platforms than men of the same age bracket and 50. This study aligns with a similar study in Taiwan, whose results suggested that 63.3% of the respondents trusted and preferred the MOH because it was the primary information source for COVID-19. However, most respondents (43.3%) did not favour World

Health Organization because of the language barrier (World Health Organization, 2021). Therefore, the study concluded that local authorities were perceived positively as champions in disseminating COVID-19 information; consequently, they were seen as the best in times of crisis communication compared to other outlets.

In summary, Ogola, McGuire, et al., Islam and Sidika, and Mohamad et al. (2020) found that public trust in the government and the source of information was critical in shaping public trust. For example, Ogola (2020) established that the government's speeches had secrecy, misinformation, and denial; thus, they were suspicious of the government, so they did not perceive the government favourably. McGuire et al. (2020) established how COVID-19 speeches as conducted and framed yielded message understandability and a positive response by the public since the speeches were clear, gave reassurance, and had an empathetic tone. Sjölander-Lindqvist et al. (2020) also found that the government assured the public that it was in control of the situation through daily briefs. Importantly, Radlovacki's (2020) findings indicated that speeches by most governments were clear, and their delivery was timely. However, some countries did not respond quickly to the crisis and gave conflicting COVID-19 information. Such countries experienced higher disease cases since the public was reluctant and slow to act on the information from other countries that were not their own. Studies by Abu-Akel et al. (2021) found that an expert speaker and health professional influenced public trust and perception during the COVID-19 crisis. Furthermore, they established that experts were credible information sources and that the public trusted celebrity spokespeople.

The public did not trust politicians as the best people to deliver COVID-19 speeches, according to Islam and Siddika (2020). Additionally, politicians failed to convince the public to act as expected regarding COVID-19. Christensen and Lægreid (2020) stated that message clarity, timeliness, and regularity during speeches were critical in enhancing information comprehension and attracting a good response among the public. Health officials were more persuasive and perceived by the public as the most credible and trusted information source. According to Bernard et al. (2021), a communication strategy was taken care of by an existing public-perceived communication plan. Also, their finding indicated that disinformation was countered by speeches that expressed empathy. The speeches also clarified facts, thus

enhancing message comprehension and showing the government's commitment to helping the public through the hard times.

Furthermore, Mohamad et al. (2020) found that the Ministry of Health was the most trusted source of information, and disinformation was likely to emanate from family members and friends, hence low trust in them. People trusted information relayed in the languages they understood, so they did not prefer information from the World Health Organization. Notably, the studies focused on the government's daily speeches used to foster positive support from the public. However, the studies did not discuss whether gender, economic, and age factors played a role in how the public perceived the government's COVID-19 speeches. Also, the studies overlooked the public's experience of the government's past speeches, which, according to Yum and Jeong (2015), are paramount in the public attribution of action.

2.7 The Effectiveness of Government's Mobile Text Messages during the COVID-19 Crisis

Short Messaging Services (SMS), also known as mobile text messages, are an old tradition meant to notify the public about a disease outbreak. Toda et al. (2016) established that mobile text messages facilitated timely notification and helped disease surveillance. Importantly it swiftly alerted the public about the disease outbreak and increased post-intervention. Austrian et al. (2020), while analysing the information experienced by various participants during the COVID-19 crisis, agree that SMSs were widely received and acknowledged by the public. They reported that mobile text messages were among the government's frequent channels. However, educational level was cited in the study as a barrier or an enabler for understanding mobile text messages. The finding suggests that 85% of the respondents with higher levels of education understood the message compared to 66% without education. The study sought to assess SMS trustworthiness as a communication technique, and indeed public trust was recorded as high on mobile text messages despite the factors that limit its absorption, such as education and socioeconomic status.

Moreno et al. (2020) sought to assess how different forms of information and their sources can influence public information-seeking behaviours and the public's perception of the government's strategies for responding to the pandemic. According to the results, the study

cited communication as one of the government's most significant challenges; therefore, it is a unique competence in tackling the pandemic. The communication strategy employed in calamities can affect the overall management of the situation either negatively or positively. Channel complement theory emerged in asynchrony in using multiple media and platforms. The findings further indicated that SMS was one of the most used means of creating public awareness. Further results established that positive perceptions and opinions on government communication were more common among mainstream media consumers than those who relied on social media.

The finding has implications regarding the effectiveness of the government's communication strategy and public perception. The study agrees with Roozenbeek et al. (2020) 's findings which opine that mainstream media played an essential role in disseminating news about the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan. However, framing the short message and its accessibility was equally vital. Communicating the pandemic would not yield its acceptance regarding the reality of global public health were it not for the consistent short messages targeting as many audiences as possible. It was generally difficult to uphold the COVID-19 containment protocols, but SMSs played an essential role in reaching the public personally and effecting behaviour change.

A study by Husnayain et al. (2020) describes South Korea as among the most prosperous countries in managing the COVID-19 pandemic. The government, through its communication, managed to enforce the suggested behaviour change successfully. However, the study indicates that the public's patterns of risk perception could facilitate crisis communication, thus curtailing the impact of the COVID-19 crisis spread. The study explored the patterns of the community's perception of the COVID-19 messages, and it established that public queries on COVID-19 increased in South Korea during the widespread campaign for social distancing. SMS was important in complementing information and filling the information-seeking gap. The adults' perception of COVID-19-related information was favourable compared to disease-related knowledge in Korea. This indicates the appreciation of the COVID-19 messages even before understanding the disease itself.

On the contrary, Ghio et al. (2020) stated that communication about the COVID-19 crisis was lacking. Risk reduction communication and people's response remained speculative irrespective of the channel. This discounted the argument by Husnayain et al. (2020) that the public perceives COVID-19 information positively. Ghio et al. (2020), while rein a systematic review to establish the effectiveness of health messages and their characteristics, established that SMSs are responsible for influencing people's perception and response to public health messages. Significantly, behaviour change is affected by the message's acceptability, credibility, and trustworthiness. The study recommended that communities develop public messages whose sources are credible and legitimate. This is to enhance acceptability and trust.

To understand the importance of messaging during the COVID-19 crisis, research on mobile phones in the United States after 50 states had reported COVID-19 cases pointed out that people were adapting and stepping up to COVID-19 challenges thanks to mobile technology (Prayaga & Prayaga, 2020). Moreover, health-related messages were found to be necessary because the COVID-19 situation has altered public habits and interrupted how they perceive communication. Such information should spread through efficient and reachable channels, including local mobile phone languages. This would help provide relevant short information on the COVID-19 crisis at everyone's convenience. As noted in the mobile study in the US, mobile phone innovation had an additional link that helped understand and access fotonovelas (visual stories). Text messages/SMSs enhanced information reach to those affected and the public as fewer resources were required; however, the SMS needed to be complemented by other channels (Prayaga & Prayaga, 2020).

A study by Ngai et al. (2020) on COVID-19 communication found that the COVID-19 crisis presented unprecedented challenges to governments worldwide. The study emphasised that effective communication during the pandemic is vital to the public's information sharing. The study investigated the usage of popular channels owned by the government. Their finding established that framing of the actions, provision of new evidence, and reassurance messages dominated text messaging in COVID-19 communication. An effective messaging strategy would raise public awareness and promote behaviour change to prevent COVID-19. A large

audience could be reached by sharing information, particularly the COVID-19 posts via SMS, which helps reduce the disease's spread (Ngai et al. 2020).

2.7.1 Message's Clarity and Consistency during COVID-19 pandemic

Communication channels were essential in influencing public responses to the COVID-19 crisis worldwide. A study by Utych and Fowler (2020) suggests that the government's clear messages encouraged people to act and stop the spread of the disease. However, the SMSs, other than influencing behaviour, had also been found to bear different meanings to two sets of target audiences. According to the study, the younger adults perceived COVID-19 as more serious but were unlikely to take recommended action despite the SMS' consistency. To older adults, on the other hand, messaging about the threat of COVID-19 was found to have no positive effect on them in terms of attitudinal change or behavioural change. Therefore overemphasis on messaging was likely to be counterproductive. The study suggested that all the concerned agencies, including the government, should first evaluate their messages if their goal is to effect behavioural change without exacerbating social cleavages.

Banerjee et al. (2020) conducted a large-scale messaging campaign in West Bengal, India. The purpose of the message was to encourage people to report symptoms of COVID-19 disease to public health workers with messages emphasising distancing and hygiene. Additionally, the message touched on the stigmatisation of the affected. Furthermore, three million people got messages directing them to government information concerning the pandemic. According to the findings, the public favoured public health messages that informed and encouraged them. The finding also suggested that 27% of the respondents improved distancing and hygiene. This was due to the clarity and consistency of the messages they received. However, (0.3%-2.6%) of the SMS influenced a minimal fraction of the respondents to watch the actual video messages. In summary, the study found increased preventive behaviours because of the clarity and consistency of the messages and emphasised the value of persistence in messaging.

The importance of text messages cannot be overemphasised since they are helpful in timely communication in times of crisis, as stated in a study by Magee et al. (2011). Short Message Services (SMS) communication helps disseminate information extending to public health

preparedness and collecting data. In a simulated University-based crisis event, the researcher sought to determine the feasibility and acceptability of using two-way SMS texts to collect data on situational assessment (SA). The study design warranted that the students respond to SMS sent directly to their phones throughout the study. According to the results, the study's enrollment had sixty-three students. The majority of the students (73%) had mobile phones, with (60.3%) having unlimited text messages. The number of SMSs sent was 8 and 9, respectively, and (76.7%) of prompted text surveys were completed. Within 20 minutes of the text deployment, 60% of the survey was completed. In summary, the study found two-way SMS communication for surveillance feasible among motivated students who responded accordingly. The study states that motivation is essential in determining SMS receptivity and response.

2.7.2 Repeat Messaging during COVID-19 Pandemic

Yu et al. (2021) studied public interest in SMS during China's COVID-19 pandemic. The study analysed the content and established that 59.22% of respondents had read COVID-19 public messages severally, and 31.92% had skimmed through the messages. Accordingly, the study found that over 90% of respondents browsed COVID-19-related short messages using their mobile phones at least once. And, SMSs were highly approved and registered ($M = 7.65$, $SD = 1.869$). Additionally, the respondents agreed that the content of the SMS was helpful. On whether the information delivered was sufficient and timely to remind the public to adhere to the prevention guidelines, 62.28% agreed. Notably, only 3.41% of the participants dismissed the statement concerning the usefulness of the SMS. Their opinion was based on the fact that they have other information outlets to get information on the COVID-19 situation.

Furthermore, the frequency of the SMS had ($M = 7.2$, $SD = 1.774$), thus showing that the read rate of COVID-19 messages was significant among the readers because of the potent reminders. Also, 82.48% of the respondents believed that SMS was necessary for matters of the public interest, and 36.28% and 50% held that SMS was necessary, respectively. Additionally, 43.1% of the respondents agreed that SMS messages by the government were sharable, functional, and practical besides being credible. The study found that gender differences did not influence people's cognition concerning the necessity of SMSs during

COVID-19. Therefore, females and males held positive attitudes toward SMS use during the COVID-19 crisis. The study investigated respondents of the age bracket 18-25 and 40 years old on the age difference. It found that 40.2% of middle-aged and older people were the readers of COVID-19 messages. In contrast, only 13.2% of youths and young adults between 18-25 read messages because they preferred messages from social media trends.

Wong et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study examining the transcripts for quotes relevant to their research topic. Through 29 sub-themes, they found that mobile phone text messages were important in disseminating information and advising the public in times of crisis. The study concluded that regular mobile phone text alerts are not complete answers when disseminating crisis information to young people 12-18 because they depend on adults' phones to gain information. Additionally, adolescents responded to emergency communication in a sequential process that included perceiving, understanding, believing, and personalising the information. Therefore, only SMSs written in formal language are applied in terms of helping adolescents respond to a crisis. Also, other verifiable sources of information facilitated their beliefs in SMS alerts. How they personalised the SMS significantly determined their compliance with the information.

2.7.3 Mobile Text Misinformation during a Crisis

In the context of COVID-19 crisis communication, incorrect information could be mistaken as incongruent and lead to dissonance among the audience. Under this condition, the audience would look for good news to confirm that they know what is going on in the context of the crisis. SMCC can help understand how people tend to trust or not trust specific news sources depending on how they perceive it during a crisis and whether they feel that information presented by such sources is accurate (Lu & Jin, 2020).

A cross-sectional survey conducted in South Africa by Fischer et al. (2021) concerning change in the perception and use of Mobile SMS technology during the COVID-19 crisis, the finding was as follows. The study results showed that (24.44%) consumed mobile phone content, with (22.47%) stating that they got their COVID-19 information through mobile phone messages. The study, in summary, indicated that mobile technology was the most preferred means of

getting COVID-19 messages during the lockdown. However, misinformation spread due to people's ability to use mobile technology beyond reading the messages concerning the disease and searching through the websites for those who could afford the data cost.

In Rwanda, Uwamahoro (2016) conducted a qualitative study in the Kimisagara sector of Nyarugenge District on SMS to end-users to achieve an efficient early warning system before, during, and post-crisis. They found that SMSs can communicate effectively and facilitate a moderated information flow in a crisis. The study assessed how SMS was applied to increase public awareness and communicate preparedness and adaptation to disasters. According to the findings, the mean age of the respondents was 33.7, with 56.7% of the participants having attained secondary education. 35% had experienced a disaster, and 32.5% had not experienced a disaster.

Nevertheless, only 25.8% of the respondents were aware of the emergency number for conveying the SMSs despite (74.8%) of the participants using their mobile phones almost daily. A whopping 95.7% could read the SMS, out of which 63.5% read government-sent SMS, albeit not consistently. 56.7% indicated that SMS was the most preferred communication method in times of disaster; therefore, the study suggested that SMSs should be sent directly to the end-users and should not go through the intermediates to allay misinformation.

Lester et al. (2010) looked at SMS to communicate and improve the delivery of messages in times of health crisis in Kenya. Their finding had 538 participants receiving SMSs intervention in HIV/AIDS standard care. The results indicated that 168 of the participants received the SMSs. The study thus concluded that patients who received the SMSs significantly improved their adherence to Anti Retroviral Treatment. Their chances of survival also improved significantly from those who never received them. Therefore, mobile text messages effectively pass verifiable information in a resource-limited situation. The study agrees with Zurovac et al.'s (2011) finding that appraises mobile text messaging based on resource management and information accuracy in times of crisis.

In summary, Fischer et al. (2021) established that mobile text messages were important during crisis communication. Text messages helped in delivering timely notifications and surveillance during a crisis. Whereas Prayaga and Prayaga (2020) found that SMSs were convenient and cost-effective, Ngai et al. (2020) established that mobile text messages were paramount in delivering public messages. They also found that SMSs could reach many people during a crisis. Utych and Fowler et al. (2020) found that SMS encouraged public response due to its clarity. However, contrary to most findings, the duo established that SMS had no significant effect on attitudes or behaviour change among the people. They also stated that people who received the messages were likely to follow the COVID -19 containment guidelines.

Banerjee et al. (2020) established that consistency and clarity of mobile text messages enhance COVID-19 response; however, Magee et al. (2011) found that motivation was an essential factor in SMS response since an unmotivated lot can read an SMS; however, they did not respond accordingly. Austrian et al. (2020) found that education level was an important determinant of message understandability hence sharability. Husnayain et al. (2020) found that text messages were important in complementing COVID-19 information; therefore, it was necessary to tailor the messages to suit the information need of the public. Ghio et al. (2020) established that the public was speculative irrespective of the channel used; therefore, harmonising all the information before disseminating them for understandability was crucial. Yu et al. (2021) found that people had read SMS messages on COVID-19 several times; thus, they were helpful. Older adults read more about COVID-19 through the text messages sent.

Wong et al. (2018) indicated that SMS was not a complete means of delivering crisis information and must be complemented with other channels. Older adults respond differently based on their SMS' understandability, believability, and credibility. Fischer et al. (2021) found that SMS, whose sources were unverifiable, aided misinformation during a crisis. Uwamahoro (2016) also found that verifiable sources limited misinformation; Lester et al. (2010) argued that message accuracy was important during a crisis to limit misinformation and enhance message comprehension. Notably, the findings show importance, clarity, accuracy, consistency, and complementarity. Additionally, the timeliness, credibility, trustworthiness,

and comprehensibility of SMSs are essential. However, it is paramount to examine public attribution of their responses to mobile text messages and misinformation.

2.8 How the Artistic Expressions on COVID-19 Influenced Public Response to the crisis

Art can be a means of responding to misinformation and disinformation about COVID-19 (Wanjiru & Wanjiru, 2021). For example, the State House Choir sang songs composed to address public concerns about the virus, including messages on reducing the harmful effects of the disease. Artists are significant players when it comes to the fight against COVID-19. They employ various genres to address issues that have cropped up since COVID-19. Art helps simplify information and reduce stigma, like in the case of HIV/AIDS. Also, art adds humour and helps explain the logic of specific actions taken to reduce the adverse effects of COVID-19 (Wanjiru & Wanjiru, 2021).

A study by Cinelli et al. (2020) delved into public perception of crisis communication regarding COVID-19. The communication aspects of COVID-19 that they found to impact perception included the messages on the social distance conveyed in different ways, including art. For containment of the pandemic, behaviour change is essential; however, such a change emanates from the strategy used by the government.

According to Kearns and Kearns (2020), effective communication strategies to combat the quick spread of the COVID-19 crisis have yielded the use of artistic expressions such as comics to positively convey messages that promote behaviour change and alter public perception. The comics reflect society and their reaction to the COVID-19 crisis as they adjust their lives based on the messages they receive. More so, comics harness the power of visual text and are compelling in driving the message home. They add humour to artistic expression and significantly help curtail the spread of the virus. This descriptive study found that media outlets use comics to create awareness and edutainment. The comics augur along the cultural angle and consequently shape cultural perceptions.

2.8.1 Forms of Artistic Expression during COVID-19

In research by Thompson et al. (2020), music was cited as a communication approach for educating or disseminating information about crises such as COVID-19 in Ghana. This study finds that songs are paramount in spreading information about COVID-19 and creating awareness of the preventive measures propagated by health experts. The researcher searched YouTube 25 times to find songs that met the COVID-19 crisis message dissemination criteria. The musicians wrote most songs in English, Ghanaian Pidgin English, Akan, Ga, or Dagbani. The lyrical composition reflected Ghana's multilingual population, with half of the sampled songs containing three languages. The essence of using local or national languages in musical compositions was to help the public understand the message and relate to it (Thompson et al., 2020). Many artists took the opportunity and composed songs about the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of these songs were done in collaboration or through sponsorship by the government (Thompson, Nutor & Johnson, 2020).

Notably, Thompson et al. (2020) analysed songs based on themes such as public health guidelines, the reality of COVID-19, and the implication of the virus to the public. The study's findings showed that songs had the potential to share information about emerging public health crises and shape perception. Also, they found that songs are persuasive in effecting behaviour change and can significantly impact the reception of an idea and create awareness and knowledge. Additionally, song lyrics are paramount in understanding people's attitudes and perceptions of COVID-19 crisis communication, besides influencing the strategies for promoting suggested behaviour change.

Noordyanto and Ramadhan (2020) also studied the non-narrative form of COVID-19 crisis communication on the Island of Madura. In their research, they explored the application of the cultural identity of the Madurese artists, designing stickers with COVID-19 messages to reduce the escalation of COVID-19. They observed and interviewed the Madurese people and the stickers to understand design problems and literature studies. The understanding was necessary for obtaining sources of supporting theories. In this study, stickers with COVID-19 messages sparked participation and interaction among Madurese members in COVID-19 crisis

awareness initiatives. The study found that specific media and visual communication were vital communication strategies.

Mulemi (2020) analysed music and poetic compositions on the COVID-19 crisis and content and discourse and established that people shared songs and other art forms on COVID-19 information on social platforms, including WhatsApp and Facebook. The study concluded that people construct the meaning of the COVID-19 pandemic from musical messages. The public also learns about the consequences of the pandemic through forms other than direct speeches. Considerably, musical and poetic performances attempt to promote compliance. Choreography and musical composition are also premised on creating and sharing digital COVID-19 lyrics.

Schultz (2016) conducted a qualitative study to explore the impact of art on engaging society on matters that affect their lives, including public health. It was conducted in South Africa. The study found that artistic expressions such as murals indicate how certain groups or communities communicate essential information to society. The painted mural communicates themes of social inclusion as well as creating dialogue. This study's finding agrees with Anstett's study (2020) in Seattle, where murals were photographed and widely shared on social platforms to initiate public dialogue and give moral support to the affected during the COVID-19 crisis.

In examining the public understanding and response to Ghana's COVID-19 pandemic, Aikins (2020) conducted a study focusing on the creative art sector. Music, murals, comedy, and textile design were the forms of artistic expression that the study examined. According to the study's findings, the Ghanaians interpreted COVID-19 information for emotional connection, creating social awareness and laying the foundation for the public to understand the situation through artistic expressions. Cabedo-Mas et al. (2021), in a descriptive survey, also found out that music, as used in Spain, was critical in helping the Spaniards to relax, improve their moods positively, and in keeping company and killing boredom during the lockdown. They perceived music as valuable for personal and social well-being. 83.6% of the participants reported listening to music daily, and 1.8% reported listening to music once or less weekly during the COVID-19 pandemic. In a question asking about the respondents' knowledge of COVID-19

musical initiatives, 31.1% acknowledged the existence of such initiatives and indicated that they follow them, and 24.2% said they were aware and had participated in some of the musical endeavours. Only 6.6% were unaware of the initiatives. When asked about how they perceived music's value in educating the masses about the pandemic and lockdown (53.1%), the respondents indicated that music had helped them learn more about COVID-19. 26.8% stated that music had helped them quite a lot. And only 1% downplayed its importance of it.

Hamaguchi et al. (2020) argue that today's primary challenge is accurately disseminating information in times of crisis. Amidst the COVID-19 crisis, social media has emerged as one of the platforms actively used to convey information about the pandemic; however, most of that information remains unverified. Visual aid as a form of artistic expression has historically been used to educate the masses and impact specific behavioural changes. In their study, Hamaguchi, Nematollahi, and Minter state that artistic expressions are believable and memorable and can help crisis communication.

Wanjiru and Wanjiru's (2021) findings indicated that songs were composed to address public concerns during the COVID-19 situation, and art was critical in simplifying COVID-19 information and reducing stigma. Cinelli et al. (2020) indicated that artistic expression was essential in modeling behaviour change. In their finding, Kearns and Kearns (2020) showed that COVID-19 information was successfully conveyed by comics and other forms of artistic expression, thus promoting behaviour change. Comics complemented visual texts, thus enhancing awareness of the situation and message understandability. According to a study by Thompson et al. (2020), governments widely used music to disseminate COVID-19 information, with most of the songs composed in local languages to enhance the understandability of COVID-19.

Furthermore, Noordyanto and Ramadhan (2020) found that stickers were artistically designed to communicate COVID-19 information and enhance the public's participation in COVID-19 matters. According to a finding by Mulemi (2020), countries widely shared songs on social platforms to create awareness of the COVID-19 pandemic and its adverse effects to promote compliance with containment measures. A finding by Schultz (2016); Aikins (2020), murals

were used by the community to pass vital information about COVID-19 and social inclusion. Anstett (2020) found that communities widely shared murals to initiate dialogue and give moral support to those affected by the pandemic. Cabedo-Mas et al. (2021) found that music helped people understand the pandemic and relax. Music was perceived as valuable during the COVID-19 lockdowns. Finally, Hamaguchi et al. (2020) found that visual art was influential in disseminating COVID-19 information and effecting behaviour change. Also, the study found visual art to be believable in times of the COVID-19 crisis.

2.9 Conceptual Framework

According to the study topic, the conceptual framework shows the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. It presupposes that the government's speeches on COVID-19 crisis communication from March to December 2020 influenced public perception of the crisis. COVID-19 text messages or SMS also influence public understanding of crisis communication. Lastly, artistic expression as strategies for communicating the COVID-19 crisis impacts public response to the government's crisis communication.

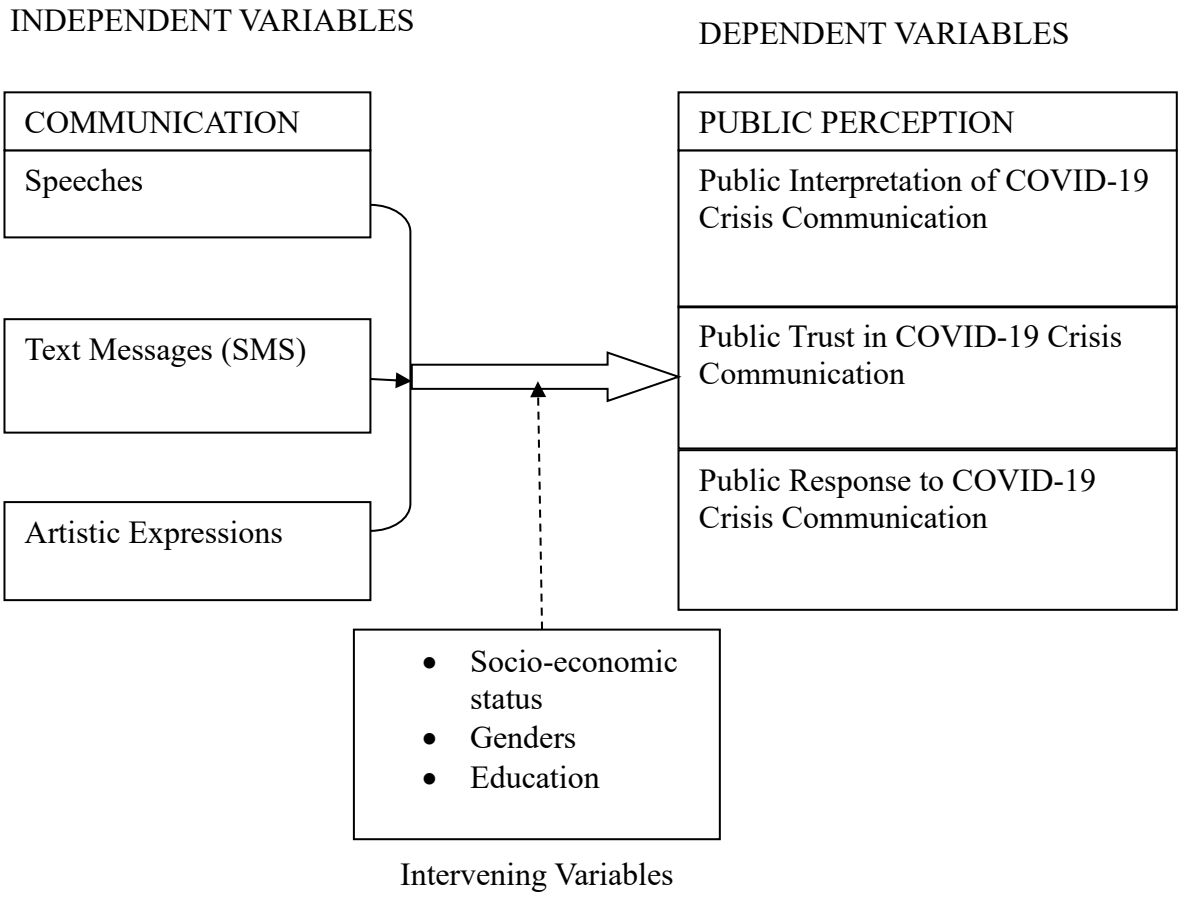


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

2.9.1 Review of the Variables

The variables illustrated in figure 2.1 indicate their relationship and dynamic nature in the context of public perception of the COVID-19 crisis communication strategy by the government. According to Dada et al. (2021), studies from previous disease outbreaks have established that the framing and how messages are communicated profoundly impact the public trust and compliance with the desired measures. This section, therefore, explains in detail the variables illustrated in the figure above.

2.9.2 Speeches

Leaders apply various channels to communicate with the public during a crisis. One of the most notable channels during the COVID-19 pandemic is public speeches to induce behaviour that eventually yields a perceptible outcome. According to SCT theory, public perception and, by extension, their response depends on the source's credibility. According to Ajzenman et al. (2020), information contradiction has elicited varying perceptions of the government's speeches on the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the Ministry of Health, the Kenyan government issues daily public speeches updating the public on the COVID-19 statistics. Thus, there is a need to assess the relationship between the speeches and the public response.

2.9.3 Text Messages/ (SMS)

Text messaging can be an effective way of disseminating information during a crisis. A study conducted by William et al. (2021) established that SMS sent to workers in a hospital served as an effective means of communicating urgently because of trust. Importantly the study emphasized the need to ensure that such messages are accurate and up-to-date so that consistency can be achieved. From an SCCT point of view, the experience can impact public perception, hence their response to a crisis. The SMSs may impact the public perception of the communication approach by the government if the public trusts it (Middleton et al., 2020).

2.9.4 Artistic Expressions

Like television shows and films, paintings and songs as forms of artistic expression can influence people's response and trust in the government's communication. Audiences will likely appreciate and take in information accompanied by passionate, creative art. In other words, the public will select whatever form of artistic expression they deem fit and entertaining. They will likely identify with the messages from such content before acting on the message (Mulemi, 2020).

2.9.5 Public Interpretation of COVID-19 Speeches

According to Lazarus et al. (2020), the public is likely to ignore the COVID-19 control measures if they do not trust the credibility and consistency of communication from the government. The government's failure to implement a crisis communication strategy can

undermine the crisis responses. Lazarus et al. (2020) found that poor government messaging strategy complicated the public's ability to easily differentiate scientific information based on evidence and less reliable scientific information. Therefore, varied interpretations emerged, leading to varied perceptions among the public. Speeches are vital in building trust and accountability. However, it is paramount that the public must interpret that speech must be aided by factual information and evidence (Dada et al., 2021).

2.9.6 Public Comprehension of the COVID-19 Text Messages (SMS)

Whether or not the public understands the gravity of a crisis is best determined by their response. Therefore, the framing and the message itself trigger the desired action or catalyze the spread of the COVID-19 crisis messages. Mobile text messages have been used to spread official messages and containment measures advocated by the government; therefore, the success of such a communication approach depends on how the public understands the message, their attitude, and their perception of the channel (Middleton et al., 2020).

2.9.7 Public Selection of Artistic Expressions

Amid the COVID-19 crisis, various approaches have been employed to hammer home the information regarding the pandemic. Among these are songs, paintings, and murals to illustrate the consequences of the pandemic. Governments have taken deliberate steps to sensitize the public about the COVID-19 containment measures through various channels. However, the public cognitively selects what strategy works for them. As such, they only adhere to the measures when they perceive the content of government-sponsored artistic expressions as appealing, persuasive, and beneficial (Mulemi, 2020).

2.9.9 Moderating Variables

It is further argued by Lazarus et al. (2020) that educational level may determine how people understand a message and shape their perception. Furthermore, a study by Yan et al. (2021) found that state of employment, sex, and age were related to self-reported stress among Chinese residents and coping mechanisms. Higher income is associated with information-seeking behaviour and accessibility to information sources. In contrast, low-income earners or unemployed are less inclined to seek information and may have limited access to the

information source. The mentioned factors play a critical role in how people interpret a message, share it or adopt the suggested COVID-19 response strategies. Yan et al. (2021) argue that socioeconomic factors influence message accessibility, thus limiting or improving message sharability during a crisis. Also, educational levels may influence message comprehension and, consequently, the response.

2.10 Summary of the Chapter

COVID-19 has drifted into a global health crisis, and many factors are responsible for different public perceptions regarding the situation (Zhong et al., 2021). The chapter has provided a review of the literature on information about the COVID-19 crisis and its importance in shaping perception and effecting behaviour change. Also, the chapter discussed the theoretical framework and the model that relate to the study's objectives. According to the arguments by various scholars, as captured in this chapter, the perception of COVID-19 crisis communication remains subjective. Indeed, perception varies according to the publics' selection, organization, and interpretation of the speeches, the message disseminated, trust, and the medium used. Accordingly, a study by Zhong et al. (2021) summarizes this chapter as it shows that perceptions are partisan, given the polarization of the messages by individuals. Also, the chapter presented a conceptual framework that shows the relationship between the study's variables. The next chapter presents the methodology that was employed for this study. The research design, the questions forming the research framework, the method used to collect data, instruments, and processes are discussed in detail.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The chapter discussed the methodology used in this study and provided explanations for testing the relationship between the variables in the conceptual framework. The chapter also focused on research design. Also, the chapter discusses the study area, target population, sample and sampling technique, sample size, data collection instruments, pre-testing, research instrument's validity and reliability, data collection procedure, data analysis, and ethical consideration.

3.2 Research Design

A descriptive survey was employed to collect quantitative data on public perception of the government's COVID-19 crisis communication. This design was appropriate to gather data that reflects the attitudes, behaviour, opinion, and beliefs that are not directly observable. It was suitable for this study because it enabled efficient data collection. The additional rationale for this design was the assumption that it accorded the target respondents an environment that made them feel more comfortable accomplishing the survey instead of interviews. The quantitative data was applied in testing for behaviour change against conventional knowledge arising from expected reactions and added to the construct validity of the research design. The survey study was adopted to understand better how the household heads in Kibra perceived GoK's COVID-19 crisis communication strategy. According to Baxter and Jack (2008), this particular research design is inclusive in the type and number of variables for the study; thus, it is less expensive and appropriate for generalizing. The design was relevant for this study because it helped to answer the questions raised, solve the problems posed, and establish baselines for future comparison.

3.3 Study Area

Kibra Sub-county is one of the seventeen Sub-counties in the larger Nairobi County. Located Southwest of Nairobi City, it has an area of 12.1 kilometres. It is located 6.5 kilometres away from the city. The Kibra neighbourhood has the following villages, Kisumu Ndogo, Lindi, Gatwekera, Soweto East, Kianda, Mashimoni, Makina, Siranga, and Laini Saba, Kichinjio, Raila, and Kambi Muru. The vast part of the area comprises temporary tin structures with limited access to electricity and water. Also, most of the schools in the slum are private. The

researcher chose the informal settlement of Kibra because it hosts a larger population than other informal settlements in Nairobi.

Additionally, Kibra hosts a population at more risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus because of the cramped setting with poor housing that makes containment measures such as social distancing almost impossible and limited access to clean water. The combination of such factors implies the importance of government communication targeting informal settlements, according to Lapierre (2021). Kibra Sub-county was identified because the COVID-19 crisis had heavily impacted it. Also, it was the fact that Kibra Sub-county is considered of low socioeconomic status, implying that the study's intervening variables were appropriate to fit the context, particularly the government's communication to sensitize the respondents and reduce the uncertainty associated with the COVID-19 disease.

3.4 Target Population

The target population was the households in one ward in Kibra Sub-county Nairobi. The Kibra Sub-County has an estimated 181,509 people and 61,690 households. The Sub-County has five Wards, giving an average of 12,815 households in each of the sub-county wards. Regarding gender distribution Kibra has 94,199 males, 91,569 females, and nine identifying as intersex ("2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census - Population by County and Sub-county - Kenya Data Portal," (2021). The calculation of the sample size for the study was based on the average population of 12,815 households. The respondents' data provided first-hand reactions and opinions on the government's communication strategy from March 2020 to December 2020 on COVID-19. According to Were and Kimaru-Muchai (2021), many residents in Kibra are living on less than a dollar a day, besides high levels of unemployment and poverty.

3.5 Sample and Sampling Technique

Probability sampling was applied to determine the study's location, particularly the one ward out of five, with an equal chance of selection. The researcher assigned numbers to the five wards and then randomly chose Lindi Ward. The chosen ward was the one for study. Notably, the sampling technique was appropriate for this study because of the small number of sample items (Wards). Purposive sampling for determining the households was appropriate because

of the household heads' availability and socioeconomic reasons. Also, purposive sampling was used for choosing the households based on the preconceived idea that they bore similar socioeconomic characteristics and were impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. It is important to reiterate that the purposive sampling technique was based on the researcher's preconceived ideas about the sample's required characteristics. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2012), purposive sampling is a variety of selection techniques in which sample members are selected to make specific generalizations. Notably, the sampling technique (purposive) implied many advantages. Among them are maximizing time with the participants who have experienced the COVID-19 crisis communication strategy and reducing the expenditure cost during the research.

Since purposive sampling was used for heterogeneous participants, it helped analyze issues and ask questions to equalize the target population's perspective, feelings, and thoughts.

3.5.1 Sample Size

In determining the sample size, the research study used the Cochran formula.

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

Where:

e = desired level of precision (i.e. the margin of error),

p = (estimated) proportion of the population which has the attribute in question,

q = 1 – p.

z = Z score value

Therefore for this study, p = 10% with 95% confidence and at least 5 per cent—plus or minus—precision. A 95 % confidence level gives us Z values of 1.96.

So the n0 = (1.96)2(0.1) (0.9)/0.052 =138

However, because the population is small, we modified the Cochran formula to

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + \frac{(n_0 - 1)}{N}}$$

no is Cochran's sample size recommendation,

N is the population size,

and n is the new, adjusted sample size.

We get: (138)/ [(138-1)/12800) +1] = 136 households

The sample size was considerably large to enable sufficient data collection to analyze and generalize the phenomenon. As noted by Mugenda and Mugenda (2012), an acceptable sample size should enhance the result of the quantitative research.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

This study employed a questionnaire to assess the public perception of Kenya government's COVID-19 crisis communication strategy. A modified 20-item Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication questionnaire (CERC) (appendix iii) survey was used to gather perception information. The questions about artistic expression and text messaging were the questionnaire's content. The study required the respondent to indicate if they agreed, strongly agreed, were neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. Importantly the questionnaires had critical questions covering the scope of the study's assessment. The researcher directly administered questionnaires to the chosen households in Lindi Ward.

3.7 Pre-Testing

The researcher conducted a pilot test for the questionnaires because it is an essential undertaking in any research to give prior knowledge regarding the tool's validity and reliability (Creswell, 2014). The pre-testing in this research was done on a small number of the primary sample size. For quality assurance for a research instrument, the pre-testing took place in Makina Ward, Kibra, which was not part of the final study. The pilot test involved 20 households.

3.7.1 Validity of Research Instruments

As explained by Baxter and Jack (2008), instrument validity is about its accuracy and truthfulness as far as scientific research is concerned. In essence, an instrument's validity is demonstrated by the existence of what is supposed to be measured. Therefore, the researcher had a questionnaire prepared before the data collection and piloted it for validity. To ensure data accuracy, the researcher did a pilot test, analyzed the results, and made amendments where necessary. The supervisors approved the revised questionnaire.

3.7.2 Reliability of Research Instruments

It is important to ascertain a research instrument's consistency and ability to replicate its functionality in a similar study with accuracy and consistency. These are the key factors that define an instrument's reliability. A reliable instrument has to yield consistent outcomes over periods of testing. Upon subjecting the research instrument to a pre-test, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.71 was ascertained to support the statistical reliability, as tabulated in the table. 3.1.

Table 3 Tabulated Items

Speeeches	Cronbach's Alpha
The regular speeches from the government of Kenya on the COVID-19 from March to Dec 2020 are understandable and actionable.	.697
The government of Kenya daily speeches from March to Dec 2020 adequately prepares me for the challenges I am likely to face.	.741
I comply with the COVID-19 crisis protocols because I understand the message in the speeches clearly.	.632
Kenya's minister of health possesses the necessary knowledge and expertise on the situation, and has been influemced my response to COVID-19 pandemic.	.700
The information released by senior government officials on COVID-19 crisis has been accurate, concise and timely, and are repeated enough to keep the public safe.	.639
The Government of Kenya's COVID-19 speeches from March to Dec 2020 reflects its role in managing the pandemic.	.730
The regular updates from the government from March to Dec 2020 increase my trust in the speeches of the government of Kenya on COVID-19 crisis.	.793

Text Messages (SMS)	Cronbach's Alpha
I have consistently received text messages between March and Dec 2020 with information concerning the COVID-19 crisis.	.732
I adhere to the COVID-19 containment measures because I believe the mobile text messages from March to Dec 2020 by the government is understandable and clear about the pandemic.	.745
I rely more on mobile text messages than any other channel on COVID-19 communication from March to December 2020.	.848
All the information regarding COVID-19 pandemic from March to December 2020 are of assistance to me.	.666
The government of Kenya has been able to understand my challenges and address my concerns during this outbreak as expressed in speeches through the text messages from March to Dec 2020.	.589
I believe the government's COVID-19 communication from March to December 2020 through the the texts messages is useful.	.620

Artistic Expression	Cronbach's Alpha
I have seen wall painting about COVID-19 from March to Dec 2020 and think of them as ways of communicating the COVID-19 pandemic.	.678
The Government of Kenyafrom March and Dec 2020 has clearly expressed the necessary actions I need to take to stay safe through artistic expressions (songs and murals).	.706
I am clear about the messages the government of Kenya is sending in response to the COVID-19 from March and Dec 2020 through the artistic expression.	.698
The Government sponsored artistic expression such as music and murals for the containment of the COVID-19 between March and December 2020 are effective.	.792
I am clear about what artistic expressions are communicating about COVID-19 pandemic.	.700
The artistic expressions have helped me to understand my challenges and address them.	.695
The artists are credible enough to trust in disseminating COVID-19 pandemic.	.695

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher modified a 20-item Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) questionnaire for collecting data. The 123 questionnaires were physically administered to the respondents between October 2021 and December 2021 to generate primary data. The questionnaires were in English, and the research assistant aided in translating for those who could not understand the language. Importantly, the study employed quantitative research to itemize the problem by generating statistical data and frequencies for analyzing attitudes, reactions, opinions, and other perceptive variables. This helped in simplifying the findings for a large sample population.

3.9 Data Analysis

For the statistical data analysis, upon data collection, the study used the SPSS version 25 for data cleaning and analyses. The researcher analyzed each objective with the relevant research methodology in this study. Because the study entirely adopted a survey research design, descriptive analysis was used. The descriptive data analysis yielded mean, frequencies, and percentages represented in the tables and used to describe the phenomena.

3.10 Ethical Consideration

This research sought approval from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) for data collection approval as an essential aspect of ethical research practices. The study included duly notified participants. More importantly, 123 households submitted their written and signed consent to show their acceptance to participate in the research. Research households' heads were allowed to sign a withdrawal letter for those who opted out; however, none did. More so, the participants knew of this study's objectives and were assured of their confidentiality. The purposively selected 123 household heads were not subjected to psychological, physical, or any harm during the study's conduction.

3.11 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter presented the methodology employed by the researcher, with this section highlighting the study area, target population, sample and sampling technique, sample size, data collection instruments, pre-testing the validity of the research, tools, reliability of the

research instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis, and ethical consideration. The research design mapped out the plan for the research undertaken. Also, the chapter presents the sample obtained using purposive sampling, which consisted of 123 households in Lindi, Kibra. The data collection was via survey questionnaires and was analyzed using SPSS software. The following chapter will present the study's findings, including a discussion and interpretation of the results.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the analysis of data collected through the research process. It provides the results and discusses the findings obtained from the questionnaires from the respondents. The analysis presents data and arguments from the questionnaires used to collect data.

4.2 Results and Discussions

After the collection of data and analysis, this section presents results as per the objectives as shown in the following tables, i.e. general information about the respondents' demographic characteristics, respondents' means of getting information, results on COVID-19 daily briefs, text messages and artistic expressions respectively as per the study's objectives. Also, it is important to note that the response rate for this study was 90.4%.

Table 4.1 Age and gender of the Respondents

Item	Description	Frequency	Percentages
Respondents Gender	Male	70	56.9
	Female	53	43.1
	Total	123	100
Respondents Age	20-30	78	63.3
	31-40	36	29.3
	41-50	9	7.4
	Total	123	100

Regarding the age and gender of the respondents, table 4.1 shows the distribution of the results. A total of 123 respondents participated in the study, of which 53% were female, and 70% were male. The age of the respondents had a mean of 30.54 years. 63.3% were between 20-30 years, 29.3% were between 31-40 years, and 7.4% were between 41-45 years.

4.2.1 The Implication of the Demographic Characteristics

From a theoretical angle, SCCT suggests that people's understanding and reaction to public crises are shaped by factors such as culture, personal knowledge, and level of interest. It also helps explain the public's behaviours about the crisis (Reisenzein & Rudolph, 2018).

According to the study, most Kenyan government COVID-19 message recipients in Kibra were youthful, with a mean age of 30.54, and male than females (70% male to 53% female). The finding is in congruence with Lazarus et al. (2021) finding that showed that males are more likely to rate government communications favourably than females. Additionally, the study associated young people with an appreciation of some forms of art more than children and older adults and indicated they preferred artistic expressions to other forms of communicating crisis.

Table 4.2 General Information about the respondents' demograhic characteristics

Item	Description	Frequency	Percentages
Educational Level	Primary	7	5.7
	Secondary	73	59.3
	Tertiary	37	30.1
	University	6	4.9
	Total	123	100.0
Marital Status	Single	42	34.1
	Married	79	64.2
	Widowed	2	1.6
	Total	123	100.0
Employment Status	No	49	39.8
	Yes	74	60.2
	Total	123	100.0

On the educational level, table 4.2 presents the following findings. 5.7% of the respondents attained primary education, 59.3% had secondary education, 30.1% had attained tertiary education, and only 4.9% had gone to the University. Respondents' marital status was registered as follows, 34.15% indicated that they were single, 64.2% were married, and only 1.6% indicated that they were widowed. On employment status, 60.2% of the respondents indicated that they were indeed employed, while 39.8% indicated they were unemployed.

The finding, therefore, shows that the government's communication would be fairly understood and perceived by the literate lot and others enjoying privileges such as employment and family. It agreed with a study by Lazarus et al. (2021) that established that younger respondents are better paid. Literate lot demonstrated a positive perception of the Government's COVID-19 communication, thus suggesting that greater attention should be paid to less advantaged citizens. In the context of SCCT theory, individuals' perception of the information as they receive and interpret it forms their judgement of the cause based on their experiences. Notably, according to Knowles (2020), interpretation variance is pegged on several factors, including literacy and sociocultural experiences.

Table 4.3 Respondents Means of Getting Information

		Responses	
		N	Percent
	Covid-19 brief	123	46.9%
	Mobile text	24	9.2%
	Social media	115	43.9%
Total		262	100.0%

Table 4.3 presents respondents' means of receiving COVID-19 information; 46.9% indicate that they receive the information through government brief, 9.2% indicated mobile text messages as their means of receiving COVID-19 information, and 43.9% cited social media.

Additionally, the respondents were asked to state their opinion on whether the government should continue communicating on handwashing, social distancing and wearing of masks, and100% of the respondents agreed. Also, the results indicate a similar percentage of the respondents in answering a question that sought to investigate whether the government's COVID-19 briefs were handled well. Public confidence in the government's communication and messages during a crisis yields a good response. According to William et al. (2021), information and access minimised COVID-19 risk perception and shaped the public response.

4.2.2 Information Source During a Crisis

According to the finding, the government of Kenya's COVID-19 briefs and social media were the main source of information. Notably, the findings are similar to Moreno et al. (2020), who noted that people mainly relied on social media as their main source of information in Spain and government speeches. According to the SMCC model, networks, groups, and individuals communicate with each other using social media during a crisis as they seek information (Lu & Jin, 2020).

4.3 Assessing how the Government's COVID-19 crisis Daily Speeches Influence the Public Interpretation of the COVID-19 crisis

The researcher used a CERC questionnaire with seven itemised statements that required the respondent to indicate whether they strongly disagreed, disagreed, was neutral, or strongly agreed. The questions addressed the first objective of the research.

Table 4.4 COVID-19 Daily Briefs/Speeches

	strongly disagree	disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
The regular speeches from the Government of Kenya on COVID-19 from March to Dec 2020 are understandable and actionable.	0.0%	0.8%	4.9%	46.3%	48.0%	5.41	.726
The Government of Kenya's daily speeches from March to Dec 2020 adequately prepare me for the challenges I will likely face.	0.8%	0.0%	3.3%	19.5%	76.4%	5.71	.710
I comply with the COVID-19 crisis protocols because I clearly understand the speeches' message.	1.6%	0.0%	0.8%	30.9%	66.7%	6.61	.873
Kenya's health cabinet secretary possesses the necessary knowledge and expertise on the situation and has influenced my response to the COVID-19 pandemic.	0.0%	0.8%	22.0%	56.1%	21.1%	3.98	.683
The information released by senior Government officials on the COVID-19 crisis has been accurate, concise and timely and is repeated enough to keep the public safe.	0.0%	1.6%	6.5%	17.9%	74.0%	5.64	.779
The Government of Kenya's COVID-19 speeches from March to Dec 2020 reflects its role in managing the pandemic.	0.0%	0.8%	14.6%	49.6%	35.0%	4.19	.705
The regular updates increase my trust in the speeches of the Government of Kenya on the COVID-19 crisis.	0.0%	0.8%	7.3%	35.0%	56.9%	4.48	.670

As displayed in table 4.3, the respondents were asked if they agreed with the statement, "regular speeches from the government of Kenya on the COVID-19 situation are understandable and actionable." 0.0% strongly disagreed with the statement, 0.8% disagreed, 4.9% were neutral, 46.3% agreed, and 48.0% strongly agreed; therefore, 94.3% of the respondents agreed that the government speeches in the stated period were indeed understandable and they acted on them.

On a statement that the Government of Kenya communication team adequately prepares the respondents for the challenges they are likely to face, 0.8% strongly disagreed, 0.0% disagreed, 3.3% were neutral, 19.5% agreed, and 76.4% strongly agreed. Most respondents (an average of 47.95%) approved that speeches effectively created awareness of what needed to be done regarding the COVID-19 crisis. Concerning a statement that sought to assess whether the respondents comply with the COVID-19 crisis protocols because they clearly understand the speaker's message, 1.6% strongly disagreed, 0.0% disagreed, 0.8% were neutral, 30.9% agreed, 66.7% strongly agreed. Therefore, an average (48.8%) agreed they comply with the COVID-19 protocol due to message clarity during the speeches. In responding to a statement that Kenya's health cabinet secretary possesses the necessary knowledge and expertise on the COVID-19 situation and has been consistent in the delivery of the message, 0.0 % strongly disagreed, 0.8% disagreed, 22% were neutral, 56.1% agreed, and 21.1% strongly agreed. An average of 38.6% represented a significant positivity rate compared to the neutrals (22%), and an average of 0.4% disagreed. The statement that the information released by senior government officials on the COVID-19 crisis has been accurate, concise, and timely and was repeated enough to keep the public safe got the following response, 0.0 % strongly disagreed, 1.6% disagreed, 6.5% were neutral, 17.9% agreed, and 74.0% strongly agreed. Therefore, 91.9% disagreed with (1.6%), and the 6.5% neutrals approved the accuracy, conciseness, and frequency of messages entailed in the speeches by the government in keeping the public safe. Results of a statement that the government's daily speeches from March to Dec 2020 reflected its role in managing the pandemic indicated that 0.0 % strongly disagreed, 0.8% disagreed, 14.6% were neutral, 49.6% agreed, and 35.0% strongly agreed. An average of 42.3% returned

a positive response, 0.4% was negative, and 14.6% were neutral. Regarding a statement that the regular updates from March to Dec 2020 increased the respondent's trust in the COVID-19 crisis speeches by the government, 0.0 % strongly disagreed, 0.8% disagreed, 7.3% were neutral, 35.0% agreed, and 56.9% strongly agreed. Therefore, an average of 0.4% disagreed, and 7.3% remained neutral compared to an average of 45.9% who agreed with the statement.

4.3.1 Public Perception of Daily Speeches/ COVID-19 Briefs

The findings of this study indicate that the public understood and acted on the information provided by the speeches because they contained clear, timely and concise messages. This finding agrees with Christensen and Lægreid's (2020) finding that information clarity, timeliness and reiteration informed public action on the COVID-19 pandemic in Norway. Also, the finding is in accord with Sjölander-Lindqvist et al. (2020), whose results indicated that speeches assured the public that the government was in control of the situation and would comply based on the speeches. Also, the findings suggest that the speeches adequately prepared the public for the COVID-19 challenges. This finding agrees that speeches countered disinformation, expressed empathy, and clarified facts, thus showing the government's commitment to stand with the public in hard times (Benard et al., 2021). The findings also showed that the people thought the health cabinet secretary was knowledgeable and qualified to issue COVID-19 information; thus, the speaker influenced public response. Also, the study found that the public indicated that the government had a role in communicating the COVID-19 situation. This finding agrees with Mohamad et al. (2020)'s finding that indicated that the health ministry was the most trusted source during the pandemic. Also, the study's finding is similar to Abu-Akel et al. (2021)'s, who found that experts and celebrity spokespeople are perceived to be more credible during the COVID-19 crisis. Also, the study found that speech regularity and consistency increased public trust in the government. The finding is in line with a study by MaCguire et al. (2020), who found that official speeches gave reassurance and impacted public interpretation and comprehension of the message.

However, the findings by Islam and Siddika (2020) and Ogola (2020) disagree. Islam and Sidika state that government officials' public perception is not so favourable because the government is associated with delayed response in handling crises and always resorts to

propaganda or spreading rumours. At the same time, Ogola found that COVID-19 speeches were punctuated by denial, secrecy, and misinformation, thus engendering public distrust.

Effective speeches are critical in creating awareness about a situation and drawing desired public response, which indicates a positive perception in times of crisis. More importantly, such messages must be understandable. Christensen and Lægreid (2020) found that New Zealand's Government's framing messages of the speeches and the evidence-based daily briefing strategy created a direct dialogue with the people. As a result, people adhered to COVID-19 instructions because they perceived the government as trustworthy. Additionally, they exhibited solidarity with the government.

4.4 Evaluating Government's Mobile Text Messages Influence on Public Information seeking during COVID-19.

Table 4.5 Statements on Mobile Text Messages/SMSes

	strongly disagree	disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
I have consistently received text messages between March and Dec 2020 with information concerning the COVID-19 crisis.	4.9%	36.6%	15.4%	19.5%	23.6%	6.20	1.593
I adhere to the COVID-19 containment measures because I believe the Government's SMS from March to Dec 2020 is understandable and addresses the pandemic.	2.4%	43.9%	12.2%	13.8%	27.6%	7.20	1.724
I rely more on mobile text messages than any other channel for COVID-19 communication from March to December 2020.	9.8%	62.6%	14.6%	8.1%	4.9%	2.36	.942
All the SMS information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic from March to December 2020 is of assistance to me.	0.8%	1.6%	1.6%	17.9%	78.0%	4.71	.662
The Government of Kenya has been able to understand my challenges and address my concerns during this outbreak, as expressed in the text messages from March to Dec 2020.	1.6%	5.7%	52.8%	28.5%	11.4%	3.42	.830
I believe the Government's COVID-19 communication from March to December 2020 through text messages is useful.	3.3%	28.5%	45.5%	17.9%	4.9%	2.93	.889

The listed six questions were used in evaluating Government's COVID-19 crisis mobile text messages. The respondent was required to indicate whether they strongly disagreed, disagreed, was neutral, or strongly agreed.

A statement implying that the respondents received text messages with accurate, concise, and timely COVID-19 information constantly had the following response, 0.0% strongly disagreed, 0.8% disagreed, 14.6% were neutral, 49.6% agreed, and 35.0% strongly agreed. On average, 42.3% agreed, 14.6% were neutral, and only 0.4% disagreed. The study also sought the respondents' opinion on a statement that they adhere to the COVID-19 containment measures because they believe that the government's mobile text messages (from March to Dec 2020) are clear about the pandemic. 0.0 % strongly disagreed, 0.8% disagreed 7.3% were neutral, 35.0% agreed and 56.9% strongly agreed. The findings suggest that an average of 45.95% of the respondents were persuaded by the SMS seeking adherence to the containment measures. 7.3% were unsure, and only 0.4% disagreed with the statement. The result of a statement that the respondents relied more on mobile text messages than any other channel on COVID-19 communication from March to December 2020 indicated that 9.8% strongly disagreed, 62.6% disagreed, 14.6% were neutral, 8.1% agreed, and 4.9% strongly agreed. The result indicates that an average of 36.2% disagreed, 14.6 were neutral, and only 6.5% agreed. Concerning a statement that all COVID-19 pandemic information from March to December 2020 was of assistance to the respondents, 0.8% strongly disagreed, 1.6% disagreed, 1.7% were neutral, 17.9% agreed, and 78.0% strongly agreed. Therefore, the average percentage of respondents was 47.9% positive, 17.9 neutral, and only 1.65% negative. While responding to a statement that Kenya's Government has been able to understand the people's challenges and addressed their concerns during this outbreak as expressed in the text messages from March to Dec 2020, 4.9% strongly disagreed, 36.6% disagreed, 15.4% were neutral, 19.5% agreed, and 23.6% strongly agreed. The result means that an average of 21.55% agreed, 20.75% disagreed, and 15.4% were neutral. A statement that the respondents believed the Government's COVID-19 communication from March to December 2020 through text messages was useful generated the following response. 3.3% strongly disagreed, 28.5% disagreed, 45.5% were neutral, 17.9% agreed, and 4.9% strongly agreed. In other words, 45.5% of the respondents were unsure, and an average of 15.9% and 11.4% disagreed and agreed, respectively.

4.4.1 Public Perception of the SMSes

SMS technology is one of the fastest means of sending information in times of crisis (Moreno et al., 2020). The study indicates that a significant percentage of the public did not receive mobile text messages consistently. The conclusion contradicts Banerjee et al. (2020), indicating that SMS clarity and consistency enhanced public adherence to COVID-19 containment measures. Fischer et al. (2021) found that text message was common among the more significant percentage of the public in South Africa during a crisis. However, mobile text messages must be accurate, concise, and timely for easy interpretation (Utych & Fowler, 2020).

In the study's findings, a more significant percentage of Kenyans do not believe the text messages about COVID-19. The finding agrees with Utych and Fowler (2020), whose results suggested that COVID-19 text messages did not affect adult attitudes. Wong et al. (2018) found that older adults responded differently to SMSs communication based on the channel's believability and understandability.

The study also found that the public did not rely more on text messages than other channels. The finding concurs with Wong et al. (2020), whose study established that SMSs were important but not complete answers in crisis communication. The study further showed that SMS messages assisted those who received them. Husnayainet al. (2020) 's study agrees with the above finding and argues that mobile texts are essential in complementing information and filling the information-seeking gap concerning a crisis. Also, Lester et al. (2020), Yu et al. (2021), and Uwamahoro (2016) agree with the finding by stating that SMS as a means of communication during a crisis was essential and helpful in improving adherence to procedures. However, the study also established that a significant percentage did not respond to a statement on SMSs addressing their concern. In their study, Fischer et al. (2021) found that SMSs aided misinformation. Possible explanations for non-response (neutrality). The SMS must help address public concerns in any crisis communication. Despite the respondents having received COVID-19 messages, they did not respond to a statement asking about its usefulness. Also, significant percentages never gave their opinion. A study by Husnayain et al. (2020) on COVID-19 states that messages must address general queries to warrant positive perception.

The mobile text messages did not address the COVID-19 situation and did not significantly influence information-seeking behaviour as much as the two (speeches and artistic expressions).

4.5 Establishing how the Government-sponsored Artistic Expressions Influence the Public Response to COVID-19 crisis

Table 4.6 Statements on Artistic Expressions

	strongly disagree	disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
I have seen wall paintings about COVID-19 from March to Dec 2020 and think they communicate the COVID-19 pandemic.	0.0%	4.1%	8.9%	56.1%	30.9%	4.14	.739
The artistic expressions clearly expressed the necessary actions I needed to take to stay safe.	0.0%	2.4%	23.6%	42.3%	31.7%	4.03	.809
I understood the messages of the Government of Kenya in response to COVID-19 from March and Dec 2020 through artistic expression.	0.0%	4.1%	18.7%	52.0%	25.2%	3.98	.779
The government-sponsored artistic expression, such as music and murals for the containment of COVID-19 between March and December 2020, is effective.	0.0%	26.0%	41.5%	22.8%	9.8%	3.16	.927
I am clear about what artistic expressions are communicating about the COVID-19 pandemic, and I comply with the government's directives based on the message.	0.0%	4.9%	17.1%	55.3%	22.8%	3.96	.772
The artistic expressions have helped me to understand COVID-19 challenges and address them.	0.0%	4.9%	21.1%	37.4%	36.6%	4.06	.881
The artists are credible enough to trust in disseminating the COVID-19 pandemic.	0.8%	2.4%	22.0%	69.1%	5.7%	3.76	.628

The researcher used the seven itemised statements that required the respondent to indicate whether they strongly disagreed, disagreed, was neutral, or strongly agreed. The questions addressed the third objective of the research.

Concerning a statement that the respondents had seen wall paintings about COVID-19 from March to Dec 2020 and thought of them as ways of communicating the COVID-19 pandemic, 0.0% strongly disagreed, 4.1% disagreed, 8.9% were neutral, 56.1% agreed, and 30.9% strongly agreed. In other words, 87% of the respondents agreed with the statement, while 8.9% were neutral, and only 4.1% disagreed. A statement also read that through artistic expression (songs and murals), the Government of Kenya from March and Dec 2020 had clearly expressed the necessary actions the respondents needed to take to stay safe. According to the response, 0.0% strongly disagreed, 2.4% disagreed, 23.6% were neutral, 42.3% agreed, and 31.7% strongly agreed. Therefore, 74% agreed with the statement, 23.6% were neutral, and only 2.4% disagreed. On whether the respondents were clear about the artistic expression contained in the messages the Government of Kenya was sending in response to COVID-19 from March to Dec 2020, 0.0% of the respondents strongly disagreed, 4.1% disagreed, 18.7% were neutral, 52.0% agreed, and 25.2% strongly agreed. Therefore, 77.2% of the respondents agreed with the statement, 18.7% were neutral, and only 4.1% disagreed. A statement that the Government-sponsored artistic expression containing COVID-19 between March and December 2020 was effective yielded the following results. 0.0% strongly disagreed, 26.0% disagreed 41.5% were neutral, 22.8% agreed and 9.8% strongly agreed. The total percentage of those in the agreement was 32%, the neutrals were 41.5%, and 26.0% registered their disagreement with the statement. The respondents also said they were clear about the artistic expressions in communicating the COVID-19 pandemic. 0.0% strongly disagreed with the statement, 4.9% disagreed, 17.1% were neutral, 55.3% agreed, and 22.8% strongly agreed. In other words, 78.1% agreed, 17.1% were neutral, and only 4.9% of the respondents conveyed their disagreement with the statement. In a statement that the artistic expressions helped the respondents understand their challenges and address them, 0.0% strongly disagreed, 4.9% disagreed, 21.1% were neutral, 37.4% agreed, and 36.6% strongly agreed. Therefore, 74% agreed, 21.1% were neutral, and

only 4.9% disagreed. On a statement that the artists were credible enough and could be trusted in disseminating COVID-19 pandemic messages, 0.8% of the respondents strongly disagreed, 2.4% disagreed, 22% were neutral, 69.1% agreed, and 5.7% strongly agreed. In other words, 74.8% agreed, 22% were neutral, and only 3.2% of the respondents registered their disagreement with the statement.

4.5.1 Public Perception of Artistic Expressions

Crisis communication may employ a variety of strategies, including artistic expressions. Many respondents interacted with such materials bearing COVID-19 messages in the study and understood their implications. Schultz (2019)'s study agrees with the finding by stating that the painted murals communicated themes of social inclusion and created dialogue. For example, in Seattle, America, Anstett (2020) says that murals were photographed and widely shared on social platforms to give moral support to those affected by the COVID-19 crisis. Message clarity is vital in any form of artistic expression. Abstract creative expressions such as murals and songs can yield varied interpretations and fail to send the desired message during a crisis. Accordingly, the study found that artistic expressions clearly expressed the actions required of the public. Mulemi (2020) has a similar finding stating that the public understood the risk factors of COVID-19. They further stated that artistic expressions such as music and poems promoted public compliance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Various scholars emphasised that aspects such as clarity enhance understanding, and subsequently, people can construct the meaning of the COVID-19 pandemic from artistically expressed messages. The art should contain information relevant to the crisis, helpful to the audience in achieving their information needs and address their challenges in times of an emergency. The study also established that people complied with the containment measures because they understood the message expressed through art. This finding agrees with Thomsonet al. (2020) that songs were composed in local languages in Ghana to enhance message understandability and engender public compliance. Ghanaians translated COVID-19 information to lay the foundation for the public to understand the situation. Celebrities are essential in disseminating information and creating awareness on matters of public concern; therefore, they are important players in terms of communication. However, their credibility is as important as the message they communicate. The study established that the public in Kenya thought the artists spreading

COVID-19 crisis messages were credible and trustworthy. The study also found that artistic expressions helped the public to understand their challenges as far as COVID-19 is concerned and addressed them. According to Aikins (2020), the public interpreted artistic expressions on COVID-19 to enhance emotional connection and social awareness. In a study by Wanjiru and Wanjiru (2021), songs were composed to address public concerns about COVID-19, simplify information, and reduce stigma among the public by explaining the actions needed. In summary, the public response to artistic expressions was positive and indicated high confidence levels in art as a form of impacting behaviour change in times of health crisis. Importantly, the finding agreed with Cinelli et al. (2020) and Noordyanto and Ramadhani (2020) that art promoted behavioural change during the crisis; for example, artistic expressions such as designed stickers as a visual strategy in Madurese impacted behaviour change and promoted COVID-19 awareness.

4.6 Chapters Summary

The chapter presented findings in tables on the three objectives and further discussed the implication of the statistical figures concerning the objectives. The next chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter four elaborated on the analysis of data gathered during the research process. This chapter concludes with a summary of the findings and the study's final recommendations. The conclusions are based on research findings on the perception of the Kenya government's COVID-19 crisis communication strategy between March 2020 and December 2020. The researcher has highlighted three recommendations.

5.2 Summary of the Study

As noted by the study, some COVID-19 communication strategies by the Government of Kenya are consistent with the literature reviewed. Many respondents perceived Government's COVID-19 communication positively. The majority indicated that the government speeches on the COVID-19 crisis were well conducted, and they approved of the professionalism and qualification of the spokesperson. Concerning text messages, most respondents indicated that they did not receive SMS regularly and did not think about it as the best strategy for communicating the COVID-19 crisis. It is also paramount to note that most respondents approved of using artistic expression as a communication strategy in times of crisis. A significant number of the respondents had seen, understood and interacted with artistic expressions in their various forms.

5.2 Conclusion

The first objective sought to assess how the government's daily speeches on COVID-19 influenced the public interpretation of the crisis. The Literature review explained the public's perception of COVID-19 speeches by the public and how the public interpreted and acted on the information. The study found that during the COVID-19 crisis (March 2020 to December 2020), the government's speeches on the COVID-19 crisis were generally accurate, credible, clear, concise, timely, and regular, factors that enhanced message comprehension and led to positive perception. Notably, the public perceived the GoK's speeches as effective and informative as far as COVID-19 is concerned; thus, they were able to act as required. Notably,

gender, economic, education, and age did not negatively impact the public perception of the government's communication strategy.

The second objective sought to evaluate how the government's mobile text messages influences trust among the public in COVID-19 crisis communication. The reviewed literature provided information on public perception of text messages in times of crisis. It is important to note that the public does not attribute their responses to their experience with mobile text messages. In other words, the SMS technology during COVID-19 was ineffective.

Finally, the third objective sought to establish how the government-sponsored COVID-19 artistic expressions influenced the public response to the crisis. A literature review provided general and empirical information that discussed how artistic expression has played an important role in communication and what the public thinks about them. The Kenyan public interacted with the strategy (artistic expressions) and understood their implication regarding COVID-19 messages; thus, they adhered to the containment measures. Notably, the form of artistic expression does not matter or alter the public's perception of the communicator unfavourably.

Establishing public perception in every crisis communication strategy is critical because it is not in all cases that all strategies may be effective despite how trendy they might be. The higher the favorability of public perception, the greater the chances that desired responses shall be achieved. Additionally, crisis communication used must be credible. It must emphasise message clarity, conciseness, understandability, and timeliness. The public showed a positive perception of the Government's COVID-19 crisis speeches and artistic expression strategies despite the widespread socio-economic consequences of the crisis. However, the majority did not perceive mobile text messages positively.

5.3 Recommendation

Investigating the impact of the centralisation of Kenyan government communication departments on crisis communication would be paramount. Secondly, studying the perceived relationship between literacy and information sharing during a crisis is paramount. Finally, the

study recommends further research on how people derive a common understanding of an artistic expression for theoretical development. For example, do we interpret images and assign them a common meaning, or does the prevailing crisis circumstance shape our understanding and interpretation of an image used?

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Informed Consent/Letter of Introduction to Respondents

Dear sir/Madam

I am Samuel Juma Ouma a student pursuing Master of corporate communication at St. Paul's University. You are being invited to take part in this research as titled above.

Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for you to understand, why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. You are free to seek further clarification from me. The research will involve open-ended questionnaires and interviews to gather data and you will be required to answer questions as asked by the researcher. Importantly, the interviews and questionnaires will require you to set a side time, which may inconvenience you.

Notably, you will be required to spare 10 to 15 minutes for the questionnaires and 30 minutes for the interviews. Importantly, your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw anytime When presenting the findings all responses contained in the primary interview analysis and secondary data analysis will be made anonymous. Importantly, the comments or responses will not be attributed to you, your role or your job or your department.

Data will be kept well organised in a secure place. Care will be taken to transcribe in a private place. It will be made clear to you that your responses will be made anonymous. The individuals involved in the research will be given pseudonyms and any individuals alluded to in the research.

The interview transcript data will be destroyed once the project is completed and assessed.

Thank you in advance

Appendix II: Questionnaire

Effective crisis communication by the government on COVID-19 can significantly change public perception and, to a greater degree, their behavior. This survey examines the communication strategies used in managing the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak in Kenya and their impact on perception. This study's findings will inform communication planning in managing current and future public health crises and emergencies. It will also make recommendations to enhance our response to the current COVID-19 outbreak management in terms of communication policies and practices.

Please check the answer that best describes your agreement with each statement. There is no right or wrong answer. Your response is anonymous and will be kept strictly confidential.

Background Information

1. Where do you obtain your communication and updates on the management of COVID-19 by the Government of Kenya? (Please select all that apply)
   □ Government COVID-19 daily briefs
   □The Mobile text Messages by the Government of Kenya through the Ministry of Health,
   □Artistic Expressions
   □Others (please specify: _____)

2. Do you think the government of Kenya handled COVID-19 crisis communication well?
   □No □Yes

3. Do you think the government should continue communicating on handwashing, social distancing, and wearing masks? □No □Yes

4. Gender
   □Female □Male

5. Age in years _____

6. What is your Educational background?

7. Age in years _____

8. Marital status

9. Are you employed? YES/NO

	Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neither disagree nor agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
The regular speeches from the government of Kenya on COVID-19 from March to Dec 2020 are understandable and actionable.	□	□	□	□	□
The government of Kenya's daily speeches from March to Dec 2020 adequately prepare me for the challenges I will likely face.	□	□	□	□	□
I comply with the COVID-19 crisis protocols because I clearly understand the speeches' message.	□	□	□	□	□
Kenya's health minister possesses the necessary knowledge and expertise on the situation and has influenced my response to the COVID-19 pandemic.	□	□	□	□	□
The information released by senior government officials on the COVID-19 crisis has been accurate, concise, and timely and is repeated enough to keep the public safe.	□	□	□	□	□
The Government of Kenya's COVID-19 speeches from March to Dec 2020 reflects its role in managing the pandemic.	□	□	□	□	□
The regular COVID-19 updates by the GoK from March to Dec 2020 increased my trust in GoK's speeches.	□	□	□	□	□
I have consistently received text messages between March and Dec 2020 with information concerning the COVID-19 crisis.	□	□	□	□	□
I adhere to the COVID-19 containment measures because I believe the government's mobile text messages from March to Dec 2020 are understandable and clear about the pandemic.	□	□	□	□	□
I rely more on mobile text messages than any other channel for COVID-19 communication from March to December 2020.	□	□	□	□	□
All the information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic from March to December 2020 is of assistance to me.	□	□	□	□	□
The government of Kenya has been able to understand my challenges and address my concerns during this outbreak as expressed in speeches through text messages from March to Dec 2020.	□	□	□	□	□

I believe the government's COVID-19 communication through text messages from March to December 2020 was helpful.	□	□	□	□	□
I have seen wall paintings about COVID-19 from March to Dec 2020 and think of them as ways of communicating the COVID-19 pandemic.	□	□	□	□	□
The Government of Kenya from March and Dec 2020 has clearly expressed the necessary actions I need to take to stay safe through artistic expressions (songs and murals).	□	□	□	□	□
I am clear about the messages the government of Kenya is sending in response to COVID-19 from March and Dec 2020 through artistic expression.	□	□	□	□	□
The government-sponsored artistic expression, such as music and murals for the containment of COVID-19 between March and December 2020, is practical.	□	□	□	□	□
I am clear about what artistic expressions are communicating about the COVID-19 pandemic and I comply with the government's directives based on the message.	□	□	□	□	□
The artistic expressions have helped me to understand my challenges and address them.	□	□	□	□	□
The artists are credible enough to trust in disseminating the COVID-19 pandemic.	□	□	□	□	□

Appendix III: NACOSTI Letter

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

Private Bag 00217 LIMURU, KENYA
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Tel Office: +254 (0) 20-2020505/10
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(0) 736 - 424440

4th October 2021

National Commission for Science and Technology,
P.O. BOX 30623-00100,
Nairobi.

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RECOMMENDATION FOR SAMUEL JUMA OUMA- MACSNRB875119 TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This letter confirms the above named person is a student of the Master of Arts in Communication Studies at St. Paul's University.

The second year consists of a major research work leading to a dissertation. The student's selected topic is *Assessing the Public Perception of Kenyan Government Covid-19 Crisis Communication Strategy: A Case of Kibra Subcounty, Nairobi, Kenya*
Kindly grant this student the required permit.

Yours Faithfully,

Dr. Julius Kahuthia
Director, Board of Postgraduate Studies

Appendix IV: NACOSTI Permit

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: 590850

Date of Issue: 15/October/2021

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Mr.. samuel Ouma Juma of St. Paul's University, has been licensed to conduct research in Nairobi on the topic: ASSESSING THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF KENYAN GOVERNMENT COVID-19 CRISIS COMMUNICATION STRATEGY: A CASE OF KIBRA SUBCOUNTY, NAIROBI, KENYA for the period ending : 15/October/2022.

License No: NACOSTI/P/21/13614

590850

Applicant Identification Number

Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

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Apendix V: Turnitin Originality Report



DST

ORIGINALITY REPORT

6%	4%	2%	3%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	Lai Meng Ow Yong, Xiaohui Xin, Jennifer Mei Ling Wee, Ruban S/O Poopalalingam, Kenneth Yung Chiang Kwek, Julian Thumboo. "Perception survey of Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication in an acute hospital in the management of COVID-19 pandemic in Singapore", Research Square, 2020 Publication	1%
2	Submitted to Mancosa Student Paper	1%
3	Submitted to Bentley College Student Paper	1%
4	ir.dut.ac.za Internet Source	<1%
5	erepository.uonbi.ac.ke Internet Source	<1%
6	Submitted to University of Southern Mississippi Student Paper	<1%