THE CHALLENGES OF COMMUNICATING GLOBAL PANDEMICS AS NATIONAL SECURITY ISSUE: A CASE STUDY OF COVID-19 IN NAMIBIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the challenges of communicating global pandemics as national security threat with specific reference to COVID-19 outbreak in Namibia. It was motivated by the articulation of the pandemic as a national security threat through the declaration of state of emergency by the Namibian government. The state of emergency was characterized by the adoption of COVID-19 protocols and regulations such as closing down of some borders, imposing of curfew, restriction of movements, mandatory wearing of face masks, social distancing, and limited shut down of businesses. However, it became evident that the articulation of the pandemic as a national security threat did not resonate with the Namibian public as evidenced by violation of COVID-19 protocols and regulations. This resulted in numerous arrests and confrontations with security agencies. Through the use of qualitative methods of semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and review of documents, data were collected and analysed. From data analysis, it was found that the messaging strategies of the government on COVID-19 security implications were ineffective as a result of mixed messaging and the circulation of false information on social media. Furthermore, it was found that the public mistrusted the government, World Health Organization and others due to inconsistencies in the information provided on the pandemic. On the basis of the findings, recommendations were made to the effect that strengthening of stakeholders' engagement, engagement of experts as messengers as well as timeous dissemination of relevant information among others are critical to effectively communicating pandemics as national security threats.

DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated to the Following:

People who perished due to COVID-19.

Although you are no longer part of this world, your memories would be cherished by those dear to you.

All those who were infected or affected by this deadly virus.

For your courage in fighting and surviving the virus.

All frontline workers: Health Professionals, Police officers and, other security Clusters

For your dedication to duty. Your efforts will always be appreciated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

At the onset, I would like to thank the Heavenly Father for the gift of life even during the testing times when the coronavirus was at its peak. Thank you, Lord, for your boundless mercies. My sincere gratitude and appreciation go to my research supervisor, Dr. Richard Obinna Iroanya. Thank you, Dr Richard, for your continuous support, patience, motivation, enthusiasm, and immense knowledge imparted during my study and research. You provided invaluable guidance throughout this research truly helped me with the completion of this thesis. I am extremely grateful for what you have offered me.

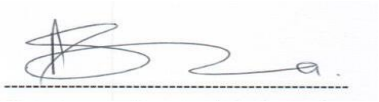
My completion of this project could not have been accomplished without the support of my dearest sister and friend Ms. Salome Kudzai. Thank you dear, for the stimulating discussions, the exchange of emails and texts, and for the sleepless nights working to meet deadlines. I could not have imagined having a better advisor and mentor for my study.

I am also extremely grateful to my family for their love, prayers, understanding and continuing support to complete this research work. Furthermore, my special thanks go to Mr. Kennedy Mabuku and Mr. Sindiso Moyo for their assistance and guidance especially during the initial stages of my study, I could not have started without you.

Thank you All.

DECLARATION

I, Pretunilla Kaunapawa Shikwambi, hereby declare that this study is my own work and is a true reflection of my research, and that this work, or any part thereof has not been submitted for a degree at any other institution.

Pretunilla Kaunapawa Shikwambi		April 2023
Name of Student	**Signature**	**Date**

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COVID-19	-	Coronavirus disease 2019
MHAISS	-	Ministry of Home Affairs Immigration Safety and Security
MOD	-	Ministry of Defence
MOHSS	-	Ministry of Health and Social Services
NAMPOL	-	Namibia Police
NCS	-	Namibia Correctional Service
NDF	-	Namibia Defence Force
SARS	-	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
UNAM	-	University of Namibia
WFH	-	Work-from-home
WHO	-	World Health Organization

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1 INTRODUCTION

In theory, communication is undeniably considered as the act of passing a message or information from one place, person, or group to another in a society. In this context, communication involves an encoder (sender of the message) and a decoder (receiver of message). Empirically, communication is a complex process that considers issues such as emotions, cultural setting, and means of communication, amongst others. In stressing the importance of communication, Paul (2011, p.5), states that the designing of clear objectives and appreciation of "how a certain set of audience attitudes, behaviours, or perceptions will support those objectives", is what distinguishes strategic communication from others. Communication is further, described as involving the process of developing key messages about issues under investigation that necessitates extensive planning and research. The ideas or messages are developed with the target audience in mind and are intended to concisely present an institution or state's position or thinking in line with its strategic goals.

Effective communication necessitates that an organization's leaders take an early and persistent role in determining how ideas and decisions are shaped and delivered. In terms of national security, Stavridis (2007), argues that early communication improves leadership. Simply put, the goal of strategic communication is to provide audiences with accurate and timely information that will persuade them to support the communicator's

goals. Effective strategic communication is thus, regarded as a capability that facilitates policy and planning decisions and actions (Jong, 2019; Hallahan 2014). Some consider communication as the provision of truthful information about decisions or actions (Antos, et al, 2008). Others insist on timely and culturally appropriate communication; they use messengers who are likely to be well received (Stavridis, 2007). Furthermore, meticulous measurement of results, appropriate adjustment of both message and method of delivery, and precise targeting of the right audience constitute effective communication.

Effective strategic communication and national security are intricately linked. Every State articulates and communicates what it considers as existential threats and proposed means of combating them to manage its national security. National security is a multidimensional process whose purpose is the protection of national values. The most important of these values is the survival or continuous existence (self-preservation; and self-perpetuation) of the state. Ullman (1983), notes that "a threat to national security is an action or sequence of events that; either threatens drastically and over a relatively brief span of time degrade the quality of life for the inhabitants of a state, or threatens significantly to narrow the range of policy choices available to the government of a state or to private, non-governmental entities (persons, groups, corporations) within the state". Consequently, Lippmann (1943, p.51), argues that "a nation is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values if it wishes to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to main them by victory in such war" as cited in (Patrick, 2011). In a nutshell, Buzan, (1991) adds that, "in case of security, the discussion is about the pursuit of freedom from threat. When discussion is in the context of the international system, security is about

the ability for states and societies to maintain their independent identity and functional integrity".

A state's national security can be jeopardized by a variety of factors. Traditionally, the primary sources of existential threat to the state are external military aggression and domestic insurrection or armed rebellion. According to (Buzan et al., 1998), existential threats to the state can emanate from a variety of non-traditional security threats such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), Ebola and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), pandemics are considered existential threats to states. For countries like Namibia, it required the reformulation and reconceptualization of the notion of national security to account for changing circumstances. The relay of information or communication through radio and television broadcast and face-to-face engagements, where possible, was central to the reconceptualization of national security and communication of COVID-19 as a national security threat.

The main objective of this study is to study the challenges of communicating COVID-19 as a national security problem to Namibians. In order to realize this objective, the study formulated three main research questions. These questions are reproduced here for the purposes of easy linkage to the methodological approach being discussed.

The research questions that governed this study were:

- To what extent was COVID-19 communicated as a national security problem?

In order to address the main research question, secondary research questions were equally formulated as follows:

- What were the challenges of communicating COVID-19 as existential security threat to Namibia?
- What remedial measures would be necessary to improve communication of COVID-19 as a national security threat?

Subsequently, the study locale or data collection sites, study design and data collection methods and justification for the adoption research methods are highlighted and discussed. Other technical issues discussed, include rigour and reliability of study findings, limitations of the study and ethical issues.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected all facets of human existence in Namibia. In view of this, communicating or making the Namibian society to understand the severity as well as the implications of this pandemic to national security, is an issue that falls within the powers of the securitizing actors of the Namibian state, particularly, the executive arm of the government. Nevertheless, the fight against COVID-19 and the protection of Namibia's national security involves the entire Namibian society. The executive arm of government in Namibia comprises of the Presidency, the Cabinet and the Public Service. In view of this, a stepwise approach was used to identify and select the study participants. The study recognised the Presidency, the security clusters of the public service, for example, the Namibian Defence Force (NDF), the Namibia Police (NAMPOL), Custom and Immigration, Correctional Services and the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) as the main sampling strata of the study. Thus, the study participants were

largely drawn from these institutions as the main sampling stratum and the academia as the second sampling stratum.

The carrying out of research in any of the security clusters requires negotiation and the obtaining of authorization from relevant structures of institutions, formed part of the main strata before embarking on data collection. Against this background, contact with relevant authorities within the NDF, NAMPOL, Customs and Immigration, and Correctional Services as well as Ministry of Health and Social Services, was made requesting for authorization to carry a study into the challenges of communicating COVID-19 as a national security threat. The researcher was made to complete security clearance forms in order to obtain authorization from the security clusters. Information supplied to the relevant authorities included the nature of study and motivation for conducting the study.

The study also required obtaining of an ethical clearance certificate from the University of Namibia (UNAM) due to its interactive nature. With a letter of authorization from the sampling strata and ethical clearance certificate from UNAM, the researcher was able to gain access to key participants in the study from different institutions. Three main stages were crossed to gain access to participants. The first stage was the obtaining of permission from authorities of target institutions. The second stage involved the permission from the unit heads responsible for information dissemination. The unit heads were critical to the study because they sensitized participants about the study by making the staff aware of the nature and purpose of the study in the context of COVID-19 pandemic in Namibia. Thus, staff members were encouraged to assist the researcher with information regarding

challenges of communicating COVID-19 as a national security issue in Namibia. The third stage of authorization was concerned with the identification of study participants. These were selected based on the recommendations and nature of their roles in information dissemination about the threat of COVID-19. The researcher requested for voluntary participation of the identified study participants as ethics of research requires. The third stage was the authorization process which was critical because even though authorization had been obtained from higher authorities of concerned institutions, the unwillingness of participants to participant in the study could have ruined the study. In this, convincing identified participants to voluntarily participate in the study was critical. The researcher identified about fifty (50) potential participants.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION OF STUDY

The world is facing a global health crisis of epic proportions. On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global emergency. Pandemics are generally disease outbreaks that become widespread due to human-to-human infection (Lockett, 2020). Hence, the importance of research on COVID-19 as a source of national security concern cannot be overlooked. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID- 19 outbreak a global pandemic that necessitates immediate action to combat. By September 2021 data, the number of infected people globally had risen to 680,596,323 million and the number of deaths was 6,804,907. Namibia recorded its first case of COVID-19 on 14 March 2020, and by March of 2023, the number of infections had increased to 171,156 and 4,090 deaths (Worldometer, 2023). Namibia's

estimated population is 2,596,909 (Worldometer, 2020). The statistics depicts a percentage of 4.8% infections and 0,13% death rate in Namibia.

The high rate of infection and death from COVID-19 strongly indicated that the pandemic was both a global health and security issue, requiring innovative and concerted efforts to address it. As a result, countries declared the pandemic a national security threat. The declaration of an issue as a 'security problem triggers political processes to institute political measures to deal with the security threat' (Buzan et al., 1998) and (Iroanya, 2018). In this regard, the spread of COVID-19 in Namibia was framed as a national security issue. Issues regarded as threats to national security provide justifications for the use of extra ordinary measures beyond those regarded as normal or permissible to address them (Buzan et al., 1998). Against this background, coercive public health interventions, such as compulsory vaccination and or restrictive social distancing measures such as isolation and quarantine were considered justifiable or necessary to address COVID-19 pandemic (WHO, 2020; Selgelid & Enemark, 2020).

For example, in 2021, due to the escalation in the numbers of COVID-19 infections and deaths Namibia experienced three lockdowns. A third lockdown was pronounced (16-30 June 2021) for Khomas Region in Namibia and subsequently extended countrywide (01 – 30 July 2021). During this period, two hundred and twenty-seven (227) people were arrested for contravention of COVID-19 Regulations and were subsequently fined. The most violated regulations were contravention of curfew as well as contravention of restrictions relating to liquor purchases. The increase in the number of arrests indicated

that the pandemic was not sufficiently framed as an existential threat to the Namibian state. Therefore, this study examined the challenges faced by the Namibian state in communicating COVI19-19 pandemic as a national security threat to the state.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global pandemic that required immediate response. By 5 September 2021 data according to Worldometer (2020), the number of infected people globally rose to 221,253,903 million and the number of deaths was 4,578,176. On March 14, 2020, Namibia recorded its first case of COVID-19 and by 05 September 2021, the number of infections rose to 125, 494 and 3, 407 deaths (Worldometer, 2020). Namibia's estimated population is 2,596,909 (Worldometer, 2020). According to Waever (1995), an issue becomes a national security threat when securitizing actors through the 'speech act' declares the issue as such.

Consequently, Namibia declared and communicated COVID-19 pandemic as a national security threat due to severity of its prevalence, rising mortality rate and severe socio-economic and political impacts on the country on 17 March 2020. According to President Hage Geingob "The lives of our people are of paramount importance, and cabinet has decided we should declare a state of emergency,".

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated security threats to Namibia, as infection and mortality rates rose, and the virus mutated to new forms. The declaration of a state of emergency necessitated the adoption of emergency security and political measures to combat the spreading of COVID-19 pandemics. Yet, the messaging of the pandemic as a

national security threat did not resonate with the Namibian population or the audience of the state's strategic information or communication.

Reported cases of violation of lockdown measures demonstrated the difficulty in communicating COVID-19 as a national security issue. For example, in the first lockdown, for Khomas and Erongo Regions between 28 March and 17 April 2020, about eight hundred and twenty-seven (827) people were arrested for the violation of the State of Emergency Regulations and were subsequently fined. During the second countrywide lockdown (17 April – 04 May 2020) eight hundred and eighty-four (884) people were arrested for the violation of the *State of Emergency Regulations* and were subsequently fined. According to the Namibian Police Force (NAMPOL), between 28 March 2020 and 16 June 2021about five thousand seven hundred and twenty-two (5722) people contravened the COVID-19 regulations. Despite the government declaration, extensive media coverage of the pandemic, advice from public health experts, deployment of the military and police to enforce lockdown measures, the state struggled to communicate COVID-19 as a national security threat to Namibia.

The aim of this study was to investigate the articulation and communication of COVID-19 as a national security threat to the Namibian population and state, as well as why communication of the pandemic was less effective in Namibia. While studies on COVID-19 and its impact on different facets of human endeavour exist, very few if any centre on the challenges of communicating the pandemic as a national security threat, especially in the Namibian context. This study contributes to the filling of this gap in extant literature.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided this study:

(i) To what extent is the COVID-19 pandemic communicated as a national security threat in Namibia?

(ii) What are the challenges of communicating COVID-19 as existential security threat to Namibia?

(iii) What remedial measures are necessary to improve communication of COVID-19 as a national security threat?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Communication is critical to the success of any government's effort against a social, political, economic or security issue. Against this background, significance of this study was three-fold. Firstly, it was envisaged that the study would serve as a resource for future national security researchers and scholars. As a result, it would contribute to the body of knowledge and academic debate on the relatively unexplored intersections of health and security, as well as communication and security. Secondly, the study was considered as critical in that it would shed light on the impact of COVID-19 on Namibia's public safety and security sector. Thirdly, policymakers might use the findings of this study to evaluate the efficacy of communication strategies during national emergencies. Knowledge gained from this study would be of substantial use to the Namibian government, the defence, safety and security sectors and development partners. The research would help stakeholders to better understand the critical role of communication in combating COVID-19 threats to Namibia's national security. No academic study has as yet been done in

Namibia on the communication of COVID-19 as a national security issue. The study would similarly aid stakeholders to have a better understanding on how to mitigate the national security challenges brought about by COVID-19.

1.5 LIMITATIONS

This study relied on the perceptions of key selected respondents; and this was primarily the study limitation. The interviews with respondents had a financial impact due to the fact that respondents were located in different towns. The researcher overcame this challenge by making use of telephone and email communications to book appointments and to conduct some of the interviews. Moreover, the selection and interview method had to change due to COVID-19, regulations and protocols which restricted movement. The unwillingness and ignorance of some participants on how to use virtual video interviews meant that face-to-face interviews were unavoidable. Although social distancing was observed. For others, platforms like zoom meetings, skype and teams were used. Due to COVID-19 Protocols, this study was partly conducted by means of a questionnaire. Some questionnaires were not returned. This shortcoming was compensated by interviews. Time commitment by respondents toward completing questionnaires was equally a challenge on its own. This led to the delay and subsequent pressure to complete the study on time. Additionally, the COVID-19 protocols restricting gatherings and enforcing social distancing as well as working from home due to health-related factors were constituted some form of limitation to the study. The researcher overcame them through time planning.

1.6 DELIMITATION

The challenge of communicating COVID-19 as a national security problem was specifically investigated in this study. There are many aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic such as its economic cost to countries such as Namibia, which are important but did not fall within the purview of this study. This study mainly focused on the articulation and communication of the pandemic as a national security threat.

1.7 RESEARCH ETHICS

The researcher concealed the names of the informants in the process of transcribing the information. Additionally, ensured that the information recorded through the multimedia voice recorder was stored in a safe place for one year before finalisation of the research and five years after the publication of the research methodology.

1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The introduction and background of the study were covered in chapter one. The chapter went on to present the problem statement, objectives, and research questions. Besides, it also covered the study's significance, the research limitations, and the delimitations of the study. Chapter two built up an academic case for the study by reviewing extant literature.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of this study provided an overview of COVID-19 as a national security threat in Namibia. Considering that the COVID-19 pandemic was a new virus only detected in 2020, the number of studies conducted on the general impact of the virus globally was at a nascent stage. While most of the studies on COVID-19 were country-specific, the national security threat that the pandemic posed for countries is only being interrogated now. What is still missing from this burgeoning array of literature was the effectiveness of communication about potential national security risks COVID-19 could contribute to counteracting the impact of the virus on countries.

In this regard, emphasis was placed on the challenges of communicating and making Namibians view and accept COVID-19 as a national security threat. In doing this, the first chapter problematized COVID-19 and stated communication strategies and showed a link between communication and securitization of social problems. This linkage provided a justification to the study; the communication strategies of the Namibian state and the extent to which COVID-19 was communicated as a national security threat. This chapter continued the attempt to build a strong academic case for this study by reviewing extant literature on communication, securitization, and national security threats. To this end, scholarly literature relating to critical issues of communication or measures such as scholars' views, news bulletins and government publications, infomercials, and others were examined. The literature review's specific goal was to provide in-depth knowledge

of what has been done in the fields of strategic communication, national security, and securitization. In reviewing extant literature, the researcher paid particular attention to areas of agreement among leading scholars as well as areas of disagreement among them with respect to COVID-19 pandemic as a national security threat. The literature review is also organized according to the questions of the study and emerging themes from extant literature. Attempt was also made to show gaps in knowledge.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on all aspects of human life in Namibia. It is acknowledged that scholars have not done much in terms of studies linking strategic communication, securitization, and perceptions of COVID-19 as a national security threat in the context of Namibia. Thus, studies, which were nationally, regionally, or globally focused but relevant to answering the research questions, were examined. The literature was also organized and reviewed thematically with the goal of answering the research questions.

2.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMUNICATION

Communication is a complex managerial skill that is at the heart of the ability to form relationships and motivate others. However, in most cases, communication is handled incorrectly, which can lead to breakdowns in the interaction between an organization and its stakeholders. Dealing with people is not dealing with creatures of logic but creatures of emotion. According to Murdock & Scutt, (2007), the effectiveness of communication relates to “understanding how messages are transmitted, received, the perceptions and emotions involved and the barriers making the connection organisation and the people”.

Effective communication then includes the following activities: informing, instructing, motivating, persuading, encouraging, negotiating, understanding other people's points of view and ideas, listening and thus providing information, advice, and making decisions.

Given that communication is a complex, give-and-take process, breakdowns at any point in the cycle can block understanding of transfer. It seems reasonable to conclude that a lack of effective communication is one of the most inhibiting forces to organizational effectiveness. Antos et al., (2008) states that “amongst the cycle of communication; three important concepts are associated with psychological and social barriers and those are fields of experience, filtering, and psychological distance”. Fields of experience include people's backgrounds, perceptions, values, biases, needs, and expectations. Senders can encode and receivers decode messages only in the context of their fields of experience. When the sender's field of experience overlaps very little with the receiver's, communication becomes difficult. Filtering means that often we see and hear what we are emotionally tuned in to see and hear. Filtering is caused by our own needs and interests, which guide our listening. Psychosocial barriers often involve a psychological distance between people that is similar to actual physical distance. For example, the school administrator talks down to a staff member, who resents this attitude, and this resentment separates them, thereby blocking opportunity for effective communication as highlighted by (Lunenburg, 2010).

Communication is a broad concept and driven or motivated by a mix of various elements. According to Waisbord, (2015) states that “a persistent semantic confusion given the

intellectual plasticity of communication and social change and their roots in different disciplinary and theoretical traditions". This further buttress the argument that communication remains an ambiguous concept, loosely identified with a constellation of ideas, information, media, public relations, dialogue, mobilisation, and dissemination. With respect to Namibia, it can be argued that while communication was tasked with contributing to a variety of programmatic goals, the development of coherent theoretical propositions across issues was not prioritized. Communication and information transfer are important, not just in times of pandemic or crisis. Its role is clearly becoming more prominent.

2.3 SECURITIZATION THEORY

This research was based on securitization theory. The securitization theory is a broadly constructivist approach that attempts to bridge traditional and critical security studies by viewing security as a "speech act" (Waever, 1995). Security is a move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue as either a different kind of politics or as something above politics. Thus, securitization can be viewed as a more extreme form of politicization (Weaver, 1995). Any public issue can be classified as non-politicized or politicized, which means that an issue, such as COVID-19, is part of public policy, requiring government decision and resource allocations or, in rare cases, some other form of communal governance. Any public issue can be securitized, which means that it is presented as an existential threat, necessitating emergency measures and justifying actions outside of the normal political procedure (Buzan *et al*, 1998, p. 23, 24). In the case of non-political issues, such as the environment, the question is whether they

have been politicized or securitized. The link between politicization and securitization does not imply that securitization is always carried out through the state; both politicization and securitization can take place in other contexts (Buzan et al, 1998, p. 23, 24; Weaver 1995). Other social entities have the ability to elevate issues to the level of general consideration or even sanctioned urgency among themselves. Buzan *et al* (1998, p. 23, 24), further confirm that securitization can be either ad-hoc or become institutionalized.

2.4 NATIONAL SECURITY THREAT

It is also important to note that as much as communication is involved in national security, national security issues also influence communication because they are symbolic. According to Romm, (1993), labelling a problem as a national security threat takes precedence over other problems and dealing with it may entail more than normal attention and sacrifice by or to the nation: "A threat to national security is whatever threatens; to significantly degrade the quality of life of people or narrow the range of policy choices available to their government (Buzan 1991). The objective is to sustain and or improve the living standards in an environmentally sustainable fashion". If there exist serious threats to the well-being of most citizens, these are threats to the nation's security. Issues of national security can also include environmental security in its own right; making global warming becomes a threat to security and thus COVID-19 is no exception.

Environmental sustainability also becomes an end in itself, more than simply a means of promoting traditional security and regional stability. Although military security is an

important national security aspect, economic as well as environmental security also become important in the contemporary world.

As stated by (Iroanya, 2014) the terms security has a political connotation. He states that, "security is a subjective term or a social construct because its meaning is dependent on what securitizing actors what to do with it; if people, be it the government ministers or private individuals perceive an issue to threaten their lives in some way and respond politically to this, then that issue should be deemed to be a security issue". There exists disagreement among scholars/experts with respect to whether COVID-19 constitutes national security threat. In this regard, Buzan et al, (1998) argues that for a social problem to constitute national security threat, its nature in terms of referent object, referent objects, intensity, high probability of occurrence, nearness in time and space, and historical antecedent must be established.

2.5 CHALLENGES OF COMMUNICATING COVID-19 AS NATIONAL SECURITY ISSUE

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2019 surprised security and communication practitioners around the world. COVID-19, brought about changes and sensitivities around the subjects of security and communication. Fernández-Torres et al., (2021, p.89), confirms that "internet, new technologies and social networks have changed the consumption and dissemination of information because the world is witnessing the proliferation of so-called false news, especially since the beginning of 2020, when COVID-19 became the main issue on the global agenda" Digital communication platforms are used to disseminate claims that allegedly government actions, remedies, and advice are the source of a slew

of false messages. The spread of COVID-19 false news affects and impacts public opinion, how citizens are informed about the pandemic, the primary channels of communication used, and the impact of misinformation in Spain and around the world. Fernández-Torres et al., (2021) further qualified that there is a lack of media credibility and reliability; the social networks and instant messaging as channels that transmit the greatest amount of false news.

COVID-19 brought about new models of communication which had to be adopted immediately. “The crisis resulting from the spread of the COVID-19 is unprecedented and breaks with the models of communicative crisis management”, stated Fernández-Torres *et al* (2021, p. 3). The characteristics of institutional communication management to be the permanent presence of the government to provide information. Expressions such as “the enemy is the virus”, “we are at war with the virus” or “we will win the battle” were repeated throughout the state of alarm. In Spain, the communication strategy has been media-based, with no real interaction with citizens. The media strategy in social networks, the contents of press conferences have been reproduced and their potential as a direct communication channel with citizens has largely been wasted.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that health-related misinformation and disinformation can dangerously undermine national security. We have witnessed that contradictory messaging and active subversion can erode the trust between the public and the state, fuelled belief in false or limited medical information, and politicized public health measures aimed at reducing disease transmission. Scholar such as Nagler *et al*

(2021, p. 2-32), stressed that, “the rapid spread of inaccurate information and conspiracy theories about COVID-19 via social media and in other spaces poses a clear threat to public understanding and decision making”. According to them, in general, “two major factors can give rise to conflicting health information which are not limited to the very process of scientific discovery, which features incremental advances and occasional steps backward; and journalistic norms, which emphasize of conflict as a core news value”. The unique COVID-19 context, which is characterized by deep scientific uncertainty and serious health consequences, likely increases the likelihood of conflicting information arising. COVID-19 has been marked by significant disagreement among politicians and health experts alike; this disagreement contributes to the spread of contradictory information. Contrary health information can manifest itself in a variety of ways. As a result, it is critical to investigate whether the public perceives disagreement among health experts, politicians, or both. Political cues have been present from the start in the context of COVID-19 in the United States, with rhetoric from not only the White House but also governors and other politicians; such discourse has occurred alongside COVID-19-related messaging from health experts, and local health department officials and scientists at academic research institutions.

Finally, the public may realise disagreement among politicians and health experts on the issue of COVID-19, with the degree of perceived disagreement varying between these sources. It is critical to evaluate these possibilities because the source of conflicting information can influence whether people notice it and how they react to it. Taken together, the spread and consequences of public health misinformation and disinformation

can result in a variety of outcomes with national security implications that necessitate prompt action.

2.6 COVID-19 PANDEMIC ARTICULATED AND COMMUNICATED AS A NATIONAL SECURITY THREAT

Regrettably, there are no easy solutions to the problem of health-related misinformation and disinformation as a threat to national security in the case of COVID-19 but requires global and not isolated approaches to ensure an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to prepare for future public health emergencies. According to Davies (2013), confirms that "the association of pandemics with national security threats grew to prominence in the 1990's and that the global threat posed by pandemics required a global approach to security as the rapid transmission of the disease". In a globalized world, any member state's capacity failures could put any other state or society in jeopardy. Viewing pandemics as a security issue has encouraged a deepening of commitments to international cooperation and pandemic preparedness. In the afore-mentioned case Davies, (2013), reminds us about "the responsibility of states to protect as many of their citizens as possible and their responsibility to health security between states". Therefore, the relationship between individual, national and international security is related to the introduction of concepts such as "human security" and "sovereignty as responsibility" of the state.

Given the damage already done by misinformation and disinformation, there is need for national security and public health to ensure effective management of public health

misinformation and disinformation through a combination of efforts to ease impact and reactions from the public. As stated by, Davies, (2013) and Enemark, (2009), that "a particular disease might be deemed a security issue when its effects impose or threaten to impose an intolerable burden on society. That burden can be measured in terms of morbidity and mortality, but also in terms of the way in which a disease is perceived by those who fear infection". The disease described by the WHO as 'the most feared security threat' today is pandemic influenza and Enemark, (2009), furthermore stressed that "the next pandemic could cause illness and death on a large scale, over a wide area, in a short space of time".

This is exactly what the world is faced with since December 2019 to date where people were infected and recovered while some died in a short time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Such a prospect, arguably, sets the COVID-19 pandemic in addition to many others that may be regarded solely as health concerns, because it is a national security threat.

2.7 COVID-19 CONTEXTUALIZED WITHIN NATIONAL SECURITY

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on national security issues, particularly non-traditional security issues such as law enforcement, health, general livelihoods, industry, amongst others, in all countries around the world. As a result, developing countries such as Namibia have been disproportionately affected by this epidemic as many Namibians' livelihoods were left threatened and affected by the pandemic.

In terms of policy making, the prevailing conditions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic reminds the policy-makers about the “importance of civil preparedness, crisis management and maintaining state defence readiness” as stated by (Roy *et al*., 2020). The COVID-19 situation is viewed as a warning in terms of preparedness for future incidents that may also severely impact national security. “The current pandemic affects all people (not just the sick) because it significantly impacts people's lives in general”, the scholars further explain. One of the essential issues to note is that the COVID-19 pandemic is a non-military aspect with the capability to destabilize the societies and states and that proves to be a threat to national security.

Against this background, that the capacity of society to deal with epidemics and pandemics as national security threats requires prioritization, especially when considering the prevailing pandemic situation. This understanding is because COVID-19 poses a substantive threat to the health of society. On health, we may, to certain a degree, agree that unhealthy military personnel brought by the COVID-19 may not effectively fulfil their mandate to such an extent that other security threats may take advantage of such conditions.

On the other hand, the COVID-19 affects the economy, which may reduce the military and police capability in terms of preparedness for the current pandemic and other national security threats (Gjørv, G.H. (2020). The above scholar's view is justified given that resources are the cornerstone of security agencies' success; however, with a strained

economy necessitated by the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic, more funds have been channelled to the health sector.

According to Ranmuthugala & Amarasinghe (2020), state that “health problems are a crucial part of the general wellbeing of the people. As the global pandemic of 2020 showed, the population’s health is an important consideration. The health system of a country is an integral cog in the national machinery and must be fully oiled and ready for any issue”. The coronavirus pandemic and subsequent lockdown demonstrated the value of a well-planned and maintained health system. The country must ensure that the healthcare system is ready for any situation, local or global. Without a good system, any country's population will suffer, which will lead to an economic downturn and losses. Pandemics, on the other hand, are not new. Cybersecurity issues have also arisen because of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, cybercriminal organizations took advantage of vulnerable people and systems.

COVID-19 has had an impact on productivity because, by shifting to an online environment, organizations, and businesses all over the world have adopted the work-from-home (WFH) business model, which increases attack vectors and risks to internal data. It's worth noting that WFH has become the new global standard. According to Pranggono & Arabo (2021), “in most cases this implies the requirement of employees to use own devices and home networks, which are mostly unsecured by nature and lack the required industrial standard security measures. For institutions that already provide their employees with business devices, these are typically secured with minimal or no

administrative rights". Because most vulnerable people are more anxious and expect emails, texts, phone calls, and other COVID-19-related communications from authorities, these scams are much more effective now, during the pandemic. During this pandemic we have also witnessed that as cyber criminals become more aware of the situation, it becomes much easier for them to create fake messages or websites that appear to be from relevant and familiar authorities, incorporating words that use urgency to capitalize on the globally felt fear factor due to the importance of dealing with an emergency and needs. They also confirm that cyber criminals and groups used COVID-19-related scams and phishing to launch cyber-attacks on vulnerable people and organizations, this leads to an obvious threat on national security which cannot be taken for granted by authorities. They are exploiting the pandemic for a variety of reasons, including commercial gain or the collection of information about COVID-19 vaccines by using various techniques such as phishing, ransomware, and other malware. During the pandemic, the healthcare sector was one of the primary targets of cyber-attacks. "The hacking attempts on healthcare organisations have highlighted the problems associated with cybersecurity in the healthcare sector. These include healthcare bodies, pharmaceutical companies, and research organisations. Healthcare organisations are vulnerable to cyber-attacks and this is equally an enormous security threat concern", highlights Pranggono & Arabo, (2021).

National security is influenced by the economy, society, and culture, as well as human rights, public welfare, and environmental safety and not only politics. (Nyman, (2018) explaining on the need for a broader conceptualization of security, have addressed broader national security strategy for the world's sole superpower, emphasizing that the US,

despite emerging as the world's sole superpower for the foreseeable future, faces numerous threats to vital national interests. The need for the United States and the rest of the world to rethink national security stems from the development of threats that are currently considered to be less than so-called "level 1" threats. These threats have the potential to grow into significant threats in the future. Future and existing threats, such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Sub-Saharan Africa, pose a threat not only to the African continent, but also to the national security of other countries, with far-reaching international implications over the next 10-20 years. Similarly, given the global and national death ratios, the COVID-19 pandemic could be viewed as a security threat with far-reaching international implications.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has severely disrupted total security, particularly non-traditional security apparatus in many countries. The massive threat to various countries' healthcare sectors has contributed to radical changes in government policies both domestically and internationally. To deal with the pandemic, policies have had to change, and Namibia is no exception.

2.8 PANDEMICS AND GLOBAL SECURITY THREATS

Although COVID-19 is a new pandemic that has prompted societies to ask questions, it is not the first and most likely not the last. Sharing information is a critical component of an effective response to pandemic outbreaks. The effective communication of this novel virus as a medical crisis necessitates that governments think creatively about the best way to do so. COVID-19 is undeniably dangerous, and aside from medical and security concerns,

the pandemic's economic impact is also concerning in the long run. Sharing information in a timely and transparent manner is one of the pillars of outbreak response. The ability of states to communicate accurate information quickly is critical to a successful pandemic response.

According to Ratzan et al., (2020,) the “COVID-19 pandemic has introduced unique challenges for public health practitioners and health communicators that warrant expanding existing health communication principles to consider the new infodemic (or mis/disinfodemic) challenge”. As treatments and vaccines are developed, risk and uncertainty communication, health-information behaviours, and the instantaneous nature of social media, as well as the relationship between media literacy and health literacy, will be examined. Furthermore, the effects of the pandemic on other health issues, as well as the need for a flexible communication strategy that adapts to the pandemic's various stages.

Since the outbreak of coronavirus disease in 2019, COVID-19 was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, the topic has been covered in a 24-hour media environment without interruption and in real-time in most countries worldwide. The rapid spread of the pandemic has been accompanied by perplexing and frequently contradictory communication messages. Individual prevention measures (for example, the effectiveness of masks in containing contagion) and treatment availability are among the issues contributing to COVID-19's "communication chaos." The COVID-19 pandemic has presented new challenges to health communicators. One of these challenges is the

increasing prevalence of fake content on social media platforms. Worryingly, even before a vaccine was available for public use, misinformation about a potential vaccine for the disease was widely disseminated. “Rumours of safety scares and conspiracies relating to a COVID-19 vaccine have swirled throughout social media. These features of the media environment and the way people engage with the news call for a revision of the risk communication guidance during a public health crisis”, confirms Ratzan et al.,(2020).

This challenge has reached an unprecedented level in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic due to the large volume of information being circulated by both media outlets and private citizens. Furthermore, as is often the case with anti-vaccination misinformation, the most outspoken voices may be spreading false information. Unfortunately, when confronted with an infectious disease outbreak, governments frequently delay sharing information. The pandemic was consistently underreported in some countries, with either the government or the medical field withholding information from the public. During the COVID-19 pandemic, China was heavily chastised for its lack of transparency, delayed information sharing, and efforts to downplay the number of cases within its borders, which many countries saw as a source of concern and a threat to other countries' security.

Although the infodemic contains both accurate and inaccurate information, it is the false information that poses the greatest risk to the public. Hundreds of Iranian citizens died in March 2020 because of social media misinformation after ingesting alcohol in an attempt to treat COVID-19. Misinformation or disinformation actors provide content that fills data gaps and addresses the public's most pressing concerns.

Wang et al. (2019), identify a new aspect of the COVID-19 threat to national security. They specifically argue that one of the threats posed by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is information security. This line of thought by Wang et al., (2019), can be attributed to the phenomenon of disinformation, which tends to exacerbate security crises while also contributing to the destabilization of public mood and affecting the functioning of state security institutions. As a result, it is critical to note that, in terms of security threats, the success of security agencies and health officials in mitigating the effects of COVID-19 is predicated on the assumption that information about the pandemic is accurate.

Delays in information sharing are exacerbated by technical and bureaucratic challenges. The exchange of information is politically charged, and the international response to disease outbreaks has revealed a deeply entrenched politics of fear and national self-interest. This can be viewed as a threat to efforts that are initiated to address the pandemic by the public. This is because the security of the state depends primarily on the information awareness of each citizen. It must also be acknowledged that during an emergency response (pandemic), communication overload can be a major challenge because large amounts of information are directed at the public from multiple sources. Considering communication principles and during a pandemic, information must be correct and credible, but this may be difficult to balance at a time when information is also rapidly changing. It is against this background that any misinformation can be considered a threat to national security.

Ratzan et al., (2020), state that the cause of uncertainty is caused by rapidly changing contexts, exacerbated by insufficient knowledge and disagreement among members of the scientific community about the virus. The growing number of non-peer-reviewed articles on corona virus published before going through traditional peer-review processes has also been a source of concern.

Some scientists and academic experts argue that the SARS-like virus that appeared to have emerged from live animals held in a "wet market" in Wuhan, China. However, other scientists have since maintained that the virus most likely originated elsewhere, citing data indicating that many of the first patients likely contracted the disease before people in the market were infected. Public health experts also appear to disagree on exactly what measures are required to combat the virus. Some experts advocated for the virus's suppression rather than elimination, while others believed the virus's level of threat had been overestimated.

Uncertainty allows for negative treatment recommendations to make their way into the news. This has been observed, especially with hydroxyl-chloroquine. Early and largely unsubstantiated findings led to an overhyped promise of the hydroxyl-chloroquine's effects on reducing the severity of COVID-19 symptoms, which was met with unsubstantiated doubts about the drug's safety. As a result of this "back and forth," the public became confused and lost faith in scientific evidence. In Namibia, we had the case of a parasitic drug Ivermectin to treat COVID-19 patients, controversial reports and debates emerged as it was considered an unproven drug in its usefulness and safety as a treatment for COVID-19. Medical practitioners, doctors and pharmacists were not in

agreement on the use of Ivermectin in Namibia. In all this again the Namibian public received little and confusing information on Ivermectin thereby creating a sense of panic and uncertainty regarding treatment of COVID-19.

The public's desire for more information on COVID-19 creates a dangerous environment in which false information spreads quickly. Reynolds et al., (2007), adds to the argument about misinformation by stating that emergencies cause chaos and uncertainty. These situations, however, can be handled with careful planning aimed at simplifying roles and responsibilities to benefit the greatest number of people. Effective crisis and emergency risk communication, according to the scholar, can mitigate potentially harmful individual and community behaviours. The possibility of harmful human behaviour and poor communication practices during a crisis response can lead to disastrous public health outcomes.

The global health communication and information environment surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic has become characterized by pervasive information pollution. In Namibia the most common COVID-19 misinformation on Namibian social media ranged from bogus cures and remedies to virus is man-made / a bio-weapon conspiracies, anti-vaccine conspiracies, 5G conspiracies, Bill Gates conspiracies, Preventing COVID-19 misinformation, Mask misinformation, and COVID-19 linked racial / ethnic misinformation. All these presented a steady fodder for public panic and posed a threat to national security.

On April 17, 2020, the Namibian government issued amended regulations titled 'Amendment of State of Emergency COVID-19 Regulations: Namibian Constitution'16, which included the following section:

"*(1) A person commits an offence if that person – (e) publishes, through any form of media, including social media -*

(i) any false or misleading statement about or in connection with the COVID-19; or

(ii) (ii) any statement that is intended to deceive any other person about the COVID-19 status of any person or measures to combat, prevent and suppress COVID-19 as specified in and under these regulations.".

According to the regulations, anyone found to have published disinformation faces a N$2,000 fine or a six-month prison sentence.

Despite the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, certain life circumstances predict the disproportionate effects of a pandemic and present different challenge for mitigation. The authors claim that historical and recent public health crises have taught them that poor communication and inadequate planning can jeopardize risk reduction efforts. A few blunders can result in a loss of trust in the government's ability to manage serious public health threats, resulting in unexpected and highly undesirable outcomes for vulnerable populations. Poor planning, ill-informed policies, or misconceptions about vulnerable populations will not be addressed by effective communication (such as ignoring public health messages, view pandemic flu as a remote threat, and lack the knowledge, ability, or will to change behaviour). Vaughan & Tinker, (2009), argue that even the best

strategies, however, can be rendered ineffective by insufficient health risk communications or a failure to integrate a communication perspective and community engagement at all stages of planning, response, and recovery.

The global pandemic of COVID-19 has had a profound impact on nearly every aspect of life, including education, and Namibia is no exception. Robosa et al., (2021, p1342), stressed that during the COVID-19 pandemic, most teachers are significantly challenged by amongst others, lack of resources, handling of students, and the submission and workloads that contribute to stress and burnout. Secondly, the occurrence of the digital phase limited most public-school teachers and they hardly perform specific tasks for the students virtually, provide an effective learning environment, and communicate with students, given that the resources are inadequate.

Universities in Namibia, like their global counterparts, have adopted e-learning to ensure that learning activities continue amid the COVID19 pandemic. In a country that is regarded as having one of the most unequal societies in the world (Pauli & Dawids, 2017, p 67), the introduction of e-learning has been met with both optimism and scepticism. While e-learning has been promoted as an equalizer that can improve access equity, according to (Awidi & Cooper, 2015, p33), other scholars who urge caution and reflection when embracing e-learning question whether e-learning improves teaching or is simply embraced as a "virtual fashion." They also believe that some policymakers are misinformed or misguided about the benefits of embracing electronic technologies. The

Namibian government's education ICT policy aims to prepare students, teachers, and the community for modern economic conditions.

(Awidi & Cooper, 2015), stated that, despite the Namibian government developing its ICT for education policy in 2005, research on higher education students' perceptions of e-learning is still limited. They discovered that much of the existing literature in Namibia has focused on high schools, leaving a knowledge gap that has yet to be adequately addressed. It was established that the difficulties faced by university students when using e-learning were enormous. Most learners accessed learning materials via various mobile devices, and poor internet connectivity continues to be detrimental to Namibia's e-learning efforts. Finally, the use of formal e-learning in Namibia still faces numerous challenges, some of which are not unique to Namibia. According to Kaisara & Bwalya, (2021), contend that despite utopian views of e-learning, a lack of access to e-learning resources, feelings of isolation, a flawed performing system, system layout, and home environment, there is still work to be done before e-learning can be considered a tool that can improve access to education and inclusive learning for university students in Namibia.

2.9 UNAVAILABILITY OF ACCURATE INFORMATION ON COVID-19 IN NAMIBIA

Risks associated with crises and emergencies Communication is essential in public health emergency response. Early in a crisis, the primary goals of public information releases from response authorities are to prevent further illness, injury, or death; to restore or maintain calm; and to instil confidence in the operational response.

Waisbord (2015), further indicated that "the prevalence of a programmatic communication mind-set provided a substantial body of evidence to elucidate questions of varying interest among communication scholars". Among the most important pointers the body of evidence are: the impact of mass media on ideational factors underlying health practices, the contributions of community mobilization to local empowerment, the conditions for local media to offer alternatives to commercial and government-run media, the effects of interpersonal communication on gender roles attitudes, and the impact of digital media on message dissemination and local participation Because the aforementioned were developed in terms of specific programmatic priorities, these lines of research directed communication toward examining specific experiences and delivering specific results.

For, McGuire et al., (2020), Community engagement has long been an important part of public health, particularly when it comes to planning for pandemics and addressing contentious issues like allocating limited resources. Community engagement appears to be potentially valuable across a range of functions, from setting achievable goals for health-related initiatives to increasing public awareness and understanding of complex issues and eliciting public concerns and priorities. Community engagement strategies, when well-intended, designed, and implemented, can exemplify the principle of respect for persons in the community, engendering and promoting mutual trust and shared accountability between their patients and communities. Several notable efforts to develop guidance and protocols responsive to the ethical challenges of allocating scarce resources have relied heavily on community engagement. To begin, it is critical to define the purpose

and role of community engagement in addressing the ethical challenges posed by pandemics: is it to solicit formative and constructive feedback for triage protocol development, to gauge community reactions to proposals and principles, or to educate and raise awareness within the community in the interests of transparency and public adoption?

Second, it is essential to formulate community engagement plans within an informed context, grounded in community knowledge, its history, demographic composition and customs and a heightened concern for dis-enfranchised and vulnerable populations. Finally, it is important to carefully consider, deploy, and assess engagement methods, considering the advantages and limitations of polls and surveys, focus groups, deliberative engagement forums, civil juries, interviews, and other methods.

Around the globe, government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic have been plagued by disinformation and poor planning. The result is a misinformed, distrustful public, which is already burdened by deficits in health literacy, especially around issues of dying and death (Finestone & Inderwies, 2008). Although the cure for these acute as well as chronic social ills is multifaceted, there is evidence for the hope that community engagement can figure prominently in their treatment and, ultimately, prevention. Given the lack of ethics expertise in some rural systems, sharing COVID-19 policies from urban or suburban healthcare systems is important. However, rural healthcare systems must create policies, guidelines, and resources that consider and address the rural populations' circumstances and concerns specific to their community (McGuire et al., 2020).

According to Reynolds et al., (2007), Strategic communications activities, based on scientifically derived risk communication principles, are an essential component of a comprehensive public health response before, during, and after an influenza pandemic. Effective communication can help the public, the news media, healthcare providers, and other groups respond appropriately to outbreaks and comply with public health measures. Communication planning for an influenza pandemic should adhere to key risk communication concepts.

Reynolds et al., (2007), pointed out that the tragic aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, in the United States of America, made evident some critical challenges in the communication between government and minority communities. Moreover, the difficulties inherent in response to a pandemic raise new questions about the circumstances under which public health authorities should be responsible for communications targeting special populations. Reynolds et al., (2007), defines "a special population as any group that cannot be reached effectively during the initial phases of a public safety emergency with public health messages delivered through mass communication channels. Characteristics that might define such populations are cognitive impairment, language barriers, physical impairments, cultural beliefs relevant to the pandemic, lack of access to mass media, or pre-existing group psychological, social, or political/legal contexts that would shape reaction to emergency communications.

Reynolds et al., (2007), further posed some critical questions about communication with such populations, such as: 1. "For which population during a crisis is a specialised

message or communication product required, if any? 2. Are cultural differences among non-dominant group members significant when attempting to communicate health and safety information during a public health emergency? 3. Are communication messages from government authorities involved in the disaster response received differently by non-dominant groups?" He contends that unless we determine the answers to these questions, we risk either failing to reach non-dominant groups with essential emergency messages or expending valuable resources on unnecessary or confusing communications.

For Vaughan & Tinker, (2009), are more concerned with the quality of societal response, which depends partly on meeting the specific communication needs of all populations, especially those most vulnerable to the risks and most likely to experience communication gaps.

Reynolds et al., (2007), suggests that tailoring messages to specific cultural groups may be most effective before the pandemic, which is also the most feasible time for engaging minority communities and building partnerships that can facilitate appropriate measures during a pandemic.

2.10 IMPROVING THE ARTICULATION AND COMMUNICATION OF GLOBAL PANDEMICS AS SECURITY THREATS TO STATES.

According to Davies, (2013), in 2005, the *International Health Regulations (IHR)* revisions were adopted as *Article 2, World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolution 58.3.* announced that the scope and purpose of the instrument was "to prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease in ways

that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks". Since its entry into force in 2007, signatory States have been working, individually and collectively, to meet their core capacity requirements under the new framework. The focus of IHR is on the prevention and containment of public health emergencies of international concern. Accordingly, member states committed themselves to build core capacities in the areas of national legislation, policy and financing, coordination, and National Focal Point (NFP) communications, surveillance, response, preparedness, risk communication, and human resources and laboratories.

Communications preparedness for an influenza pandemic should follow key risk communications concepts Reynolds et al., (2007) and Vaughan & Tinker, (2009), indicate that the consequences of pandemic influenza for vulnerable populations will depend partly on the effectiveness of health risk communications. Strategic planning should fully consider how life circumstances, cultural values, and perspectives on risk influence behaviour during a pandemic. Effective strategies for health risk communication are essential for protecting public health in the event of pandemic influenza. Reducing negative consequences relies heavily on gaining cooperation from diverse countrywide entities. Communications must successfully instruct, inform, and motivate appropriate self-protective behaviour; update risk information; build trust in officials; and dispel rumours.

However, responses to influenza risk information are influenced by existing psychological, social, cultural, health, and socioeconomic factors, which greatly affect

how individuals interpret health risk communications, as well as their willingness and ability to act in a timely manner. Ideally, pandemic communications maximise the public's capacity to act as an effective partner by encouraging prevention, promoting containment, and fostering resilience and recovery. Moreover, with an expanded role in pandemic planning and response, communication processes can prepare the public to adapt to changing circumstances or uncertainty during an emerging pandemic, educate public health planners about existing vulnerabilities and resources that affect influenza risk for specific populations. Besides facilitating the anticipation of surprising events, create a dialogue between potentially affected populations and risk managers, and foster an environment of mutual trust; preparedness strategies must consider what may be asked and expected of individuals at all stages of a pandemic to guide communication planning.

2.11 THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION DURING OUTBREAK OF NATIONAL CRISIS

Communication is a massive task for all hazards, including widespread public health emergencies like the COVID-19. The most important factor is to reach and cover as many people as possible in a timely manner with the right information.

According to Marsen, (2020), communication unfolding before, during, and after an organisational crisis can be studied and understood using diverse approaches and methods, each suited to shed light on particular aspects of the crisis. In addition, the author indicates that although they are generally unexpected and disruptive to routine functioning, they are universal. Approaching a crisis from a communication perspective always considers the

nature and context of the crisis. Crises differ depending on the type of crisis, degree of company responsibility, the extent of the damage, number of stakeholders involved, kind of industry involved, and the organisation's existing reputation and history. Hence, the importance and need for crises to be understood (Marsen, 2020).

While COVID-19 posed a serious global health concern, much of the fear surrounding the disease was fuelled by widespread misinformation. Separating the truth from outright lies can be difficult, especially in the age of social media, and what WHO (2020), refers to as the world's first infodemic—an abundance of information, some accurate and some not—makes it difficult for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it. Several communication methods were used to raise awareness during the pandemic. The importance of an open and honest approach to communicating messages for desired action and behaviour cannot be overstated.

Crisis communication is being used as a public health intervention all over the world to inform and advise the public on the necessary steps to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, as COVID-19 moves forward globally, communication efforts are required in terms of citizen resilience, (national) public leadership, and communicating with stakeholders whose businesses are closed or in lockdown situations.

Like earlier pandemics, (Abraham, 2011) suggests that the initial need is for clear communication on what the public needs to do to reduce transmission as well as treatment advice. To that Liu & Iannacone, (2020), propose a new framework, aimed at learning

from assessing the output of communication teams in times of pandemics. This framework they argue should supports evaluators and professionals in the field who want to use the COVID-19 pandemic as a unique opportunity to broaden our knowledge on the crisis communication aspects of public health crises and conduct a comparative study in multiple countries. Such a comparative study will be invaluable for governments throughout the world as they are all confronted with the same situation.

By analysing how countries responded to this emerging pandemic, the field of crisis communication gains new best practices. It is our contribution to the challenge of disseminating research that can support responses to this crisis and future crises.

It is critical to have access to an accurate number of sources to combat disinformation about security threats caused by the pandemic. The media is assumed to be a standard tool for raising awareness of current and future national security threats. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the problem of the need for extensive media coverage, and "during the COVID-19 pandemic, social media use has accelerated to the point of becoming a ubiquitous part of modern healthcare systems" according to (Wong et al., 2020). For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the search for information on the virus dominates the endeavours as many strive to improve knowledge about the pandemic and the threats associated with it. It is undeniable that accurate information, when provided, not only serves the statistical purpose, but also provides more options for addressing insecurities associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the value of media in information dissemination in COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently security threat decision, as argued by Li et al., (2020), can pose threats to national security.

In crises, officials often fail to make sense of information that in hindsight appears painfully obvious, considering that the bewildering pace, ambiguity, and complexity of a crisis tend to overwhelm normal modes of situation assessment, asserted by Boin (2009). Moreover, stakeholders might have different perceptions of the communication that was provided. In their analysis of a case of Ebola in Texas, Andrew et al., (2018), describe how some agencies perceived the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) response as slow and inadequate, while other agencies reported that the CDC did the best they could under the circumstances and were able to distribute guidance documents promptly.

Furthermore, Jong, (2019), asserts that when communication professionals are faced with a crisis, it is a challenge to fully understand "what is going on." Making sense is an important task for understanding public needs, defining communication goals, and allowing practitioners to feel better prepared for the road ahead. It enables crisis communication professionals to respond quickly and proactively, based on insights into the volume of messages, underlying sentiments, key influencers, and stakeholder stance. Monitoring, whether social or traditional media provides a rich source that can be used for real-time content and sentiment analysis.

Scholars, Lee & Fung, (2016), assert that by 'monitoring, one can comprehend the platforms that are used to look for information and to what extent platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, or Flickr are used and by which audience'. Making sense based on real-time monitoring gives crisis communication professionals a

head starts in understanding what people believe and developing rumour-rebuttal response strategies, as well as how they value science and technology as an authoritative source. Communication strategies, on the other hand, are most effective when they are not based on misconceptions. As a result, plans should be developed first from the perspective of the target population. Second, messages must be sensitive to and relevant to the target audience, and communications must be integrated.

Current evidence on the factors that contribute to vulnerability and resiliency during public health emergencies can assist officials in predicting where adjustments in effort and planning are likely to be required for optimal risk reduction and communication during an evolving COVID-19 pandemic. According to Vaughan & Tinker (2009), the 'current communication plans for pandemic reflect thoughtful, evidence-based strategies, but could be strengthened by more emphasis on managing a dynamic risk event and improving the fit between communication processes and life circumstances that influence behaviour during a pandemic'. Although the underlying communication goals are similar across populations, strategies to achieve these objectives require a range of approaches that address the specific communication needs of vulnerable populations during the pre-pandemic period through the recovery stage. Because of the dynamic nature of a pandemic, delineating it into the pre-pandemic, pandemic, and post-pandemic stages may present too simplistic a model for designing the most effective exercises and preparedness drills.

An identified pandemic episode is unlikely to progress strictly linear fashion and may unfold over a prolonged period or in multiple waves. The communication demands of the pandemic stage are best described in more dynamic terms, emphasising how developing and emerging events could modify communication needs and demand flexibility in the content and delivery of crucial messages, especially for vulnerable populations. The novel Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19), which originated in China, has spread across borders, infecting people all over the world. This phenomenon has elicited a massive public response; some media outlets have been continuously reporting across borders to keep everyone up to date on the pandemic situation, challenges, and perceptions. However, the question remains as to whether communication is effective and efficient enough to avoid scenarios that could jeopardise national security.

2.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter two discussed the study's literature. Scholarly literature relating to critical issues of communication or measures such as scholars' perspectives, news bulletins and government publications, infomercials, and others were examined to this end. The literature review's specific goal was to provide in-depth knowledge of what has been done in the fields of strategic communication, national security, and securitization, as well as to build an academic case for the study. When reviewing existing literature, I paid close attention to areas of agreement and disagreement among leading scholars regarding the COVID-19 pandemic as a national security threat. The literature review is organised around the study's objectives and emerging themes from the literature.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter two, extant literature on COVID-19, national security and communication challenges and was reviewed. The aim of the chapter was to provide a strong academic background to the study. This chapter discusses the steps that were taken to investigate the challenges of communicating COVID-19 as a national security problem. The essence of the chapter is to demonstrate how these steps or procedures led to the answering of the research questions.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

The identification of various challenges confronting Namibia's securitization actors in articulating and communicating COVID-19 as a national security threat was done through systematic research procedures. More so, a study of this nature possessed methodological limitations and difficulties because the articulation of social problems as national security issues is mainly political. Consequently, accessing relevant data on the security implications of COVID-19 for the Namibian state might not be as easy as in other kinds of study. Theoretical propositions and review of extant literature indicated more than a few challenges that issues of global significant such a COVID-19 could pose. Challenges uncovered from literature exploration relate to human and material factors; technology and communication; organization and managerial challenges as well as global politics.

From the foregoing it is obvious that employing quantitative research methodology might not lead to a comprehensive study and the achievement of the research questions. The study was therefore largely exploratory in nature since the implications of COVID-19 for national security are still emerging in the context of Namibia. Sufficient quantitative data have not been generated and some challenges may not allow for quantitative or numerical operations. For this reason, a qualitative research approach, design, and techniques were specifically chosen for this study.

Qualitative research encompasses different methodological traditions. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000); Ponterotto, (2005), Morrow, Costaneda-Sound and Abrams, (2012), methods such as ethnography, phenomenology and bricolage are qualitative studies. Qualitative studies investigate human experiences as expressed in words. As Cresswell (2007, p.37), notes that qualitative studies methodically explore the meaning or value that people or groups attribute to a social phenomenon. Qualitative research is multi-dimensional in nature because it investigates human or organisational experiences from different perspectives. In some cases, qualitative studies are context specific. Thus, Guba and Lincoln, (1983), Kvale, (1996), Wicks and Whiteford, (2006) and Flick (2015, p.11), argue that qualitative analyses are grounded on studied perception.

The researcher chose a qualitative research approach because the study required the use of "soft data" as opposed to "hard data". Soft data refers to the views, opinions, and perspectives of staff of institutions and agencies directly involved in this study regarding how COVID-19 constitutes national security threat and the challenges faced by Namibia's

security actors in communicating this threat to its citizens. The type of data or information sought agreed with Creswell's (2007) argument or idea that qualitative studies centre on grasping how and why certain human experiences or actions are regarded necessary in a variety of situations.

In choosing qualitative research approach for this study, the researcher is not oblivious of its disadvantages or weaknesses. Therefore, Silverman (2007) and Mason (2002), remind researchers adopting a qualitative research methodology that it is time-consuming. This weakness arises from the use of relatively small sample population from which several observations are made, and explanations provided based on interview results, for example. Similarly, although human involvement which characterises qualitative research methodology is considered as one of its strengths, to a certain extent, this characteristic also constitutes part of the weaknesses of the approach. This weakness can be seen from the point of view that close connection or interactions between a researcher and study participants can raise questions regarding compromise and study credibility. Similarly, close connection which may likely arise during qualitative research may have value-free implications regarding findings of the study. Close connection which arises during qualitative research often makes it difficult for qualitative researchers to distance themselves from the subject of their investigation. Thus, researchers' perspectives of reality or personal bias may influence or shape data collection, analysis, and interpretation of findings.

To prevent or manage weaknesses associated with qualitative research, Creswell (1998), recommends that qualitative researchers take reflexive position when conducting research. Thus, reflexive position checkmates against the intrusion biases or subjective views of reality.

Despite the weaknesses associated with qualitative research, the methodology was chosen for this study because its strengths or merits offset its weaknesses or demerits. Thus, knowledge about the challenges of communicating COVID-19 pandemic as a national security issue in Namibia was determined through a systematic interview process. Using qualitative methodology, the researcher was able to engage in active observation as participants expressed their views, opinions, feelings, and ideas of regarding challenges of communicating COVID-19 pandemic as a national security problem in Namibia. Thus, qualitative data collection method allowed for description, interpretation and reconstruction of ideas, views, opinions, and feelings regarding challenges of communicating COVID-19 pandemic as a national security threat. The qualitative approach employed in the study involved in-depth interviews as well as content analysis of secondary documents. The use of qualitative methodology made certain that the study participants in the various institutions and agencies targeted for interview were contacted with an unemotional attitude.

The study put aside common discussions, beliefs and norms about plans, strategies and approaches regarding communication, national security agenda setting to achieve objectivity, impartiality, and uncompromised results. In disregarding own opinions or

beliefs about reality, the researcher highlighted and discussed only the subjective realities, experiences, representations, analysis, and interpretations of study participants as valid knowledge originating from the study.

3.3 STUDY POPULATION

The study included staff of Presidency, the Cabinet, and the Public Service. More specifically, the study population was drawn from the Presidency, the security clusters of the public service, for example, the Namibian Defence Force (NDF), MOHSS, MOJ, MICT, CDC, and the NAMPOL the Namibia Police (NAMPOL), Custom and Immigration, Correctional service, and MoHSS.

Mills and Gay (2016), considers a study population as the totality of group of individuals, events or objects possessing shared features. Also, a study population, is considered as individuals who fall within the scope of research interest or subject of study. Mills and Gay (2016), recognizes the broad perspective of their description and the impracticality of studying an entire population. Mills and Gay (2016) recommend qualitative researchers determine the average of a group to be considered for the study and to extrapolate or generalize findings based on the sample. Based on this logic, the population of this study was drawn from Namibian security clusters.

Because not every employee within the security clusters, Ministry of health and Social Services, deal directly with national security matters, the researcher identified fifty (50) individuals across target institutions who operate at strategic level and deal with policy

formulation, information dissemination and public messaging. The estimated population of 50 participants that were projected may not have been accurate, because the informants who identified the possible study participants, were unwilling to provide a specific number of people in position to provide the type of information sought by the researcher. However, the researcher estimated this number based on the number of contacts made and the piecing together of information provided by some participants.

3.4 SAMPLE POPULATION

The study used purposive sampling method to select the study participants with an extensive experience on national security issues, communication, or public messaging. The researcher made use of the purposive sampling techniques for various reasons. Firstly, the declaration of COVID-19 pandemic as a national security issue and its communication as such, involved a complex process that required guidelines on declaration of security threat; understanding of politics and policy processes, communication/dissemination of information; politics of international and national health and pandemics, among others. Only a few people fall within these categories. Therefore, through purposive sampling the researcher was able to have access to participants with requisite knowledge or information whose analysis can lead to the answering of formulated research questions. This corresponds with the proposition of Patton (1990: p.169), who argues that the yardstick used in selecting participants and sites for a study should be "whether they are information rich". In this case the security cluster institutions chosen deal with national security issues in Namibia, while the MoHSS deals with public health issues in the country. Therefore, the institutions involved in the study are information rich.

The 50 individuals identified as potential participants in the study fell within the sample frame. Of the 50 identified potential participants, only forty-four (44) individuals were taken as sample population. To ensure that the findings from the research sample can be generalized to the population, the sample was representative of the population. The study used purposive and judgment sampling to select the key informants for the study. The key participants were selected based on their expertise in the research matter. The sample for the study comprised of 20 key informants. These informants comprised of key selected individuals from the following institutions: MOHSS, MOJ, MICT, CDC and the NAMPOL. The researcher used the selected sample because the topic in questions required participants who have experience, with handling and responding to pandemics such as COVID-19, and as individuals with distinct knowledge and expertise on the subject matter. The sample size of 44 respondents was selected as it was presumed to be big enough to ensure substantial representation and small enough to guard against any biased views or data. The researcher drew the sample size from different institutions dealing with national security and health to allow for triangulation of data.

A purposive sampling method permitted the researcher to quickly evaluate results drawn from different participants and to decide them in accordance with Mills and Gay's' (2016), proposal. Gay and Mills (2016) submitted that purposive sampling is useful because it offers options to the researcher when a targeted sample needs to be reached quickly. In this context, the targeted sample size of 44 information-rich individuals needed to be reached quickly. Mills and Gay (2016), also claim that purposive sampling enables generalization based on studied results. Creswell, (2013), describes purposive sampling

as a method that allows a researcher to rely on own judgment when deciding on study population. Although the researcher relied on own judgment to select study participant, the researcher also used Slovin's formula to scientifically decide on what number of participants should be adequate for interview.

This formula is shown as: $n = N/ (1+Ne^2)$; where:

n = sample size,

N = population size

e = error tolerance (determined by the researcher).

This is worked out as follow:

n = 50/ (1+50 *0.05*0.05)

n = 50/ (1+0.125)

n = 50/1.125

n = 44

Slovin's formula was used to scientifically determine the sample size because the researcher did not know the exact sample size to use in the study and did not want to just quote a number that would not lead to valid conclusion.

The use of purposive sampling technique allowed the researcher to select participants who met set criteria or are considered as information rich- specifically, individuals directly involved with decision making, tracking, investigation, arrest, and prosecution of COVID-19 restrictions offenders. Researchers normally spend a lot of time on population sampling using methods such as random sampling. However, with the use of purposive sampling the researcher was able to reduce the amount of time spent on sampling and focused more

on data collection. Based on the method chosen and determination of the number required, the sample population for this study was twenty participants.

The advantage observed with the use of purposive sampling approach confirmed the proposition of Neuman (2014). The scholar posits that purposive or judgmental sampling remains a valuable sampling technique for specific settings such as the health and security clusters. Neuman's proposition is supported by Creswell (2011, p.206), who describes purposive sampling as "when researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or to understand the central phenomenon". Creswell (2011, p.206), further remarks that the uniqueness of purposive sampling is its suitability for field research where a researcher's expert knowledge is needed to identify participants with requisite knowledge and information being sought.

In this regard, the researcher's expert knowledge as a member of NAMPOL immensely contributed to the selection of study participants based on knowledge and differential roles in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic.

The advantages of using purposive sampling technique notwithstanding, the method does also have some weaknesses. For example, although the researcher was in possession of letters of authorization and ethical clearance from the UNAM to carry out the study, it was still difficult to convince some information-rich officers to participate in the study.

Group of Critical Stakeholders	Number of Participants
The Presidency	8
NDF	**8**
NAMPOL	**8**
MoHSS	**8**
Customs and Immigration	**5**
Correctional Services	**1**
The Media	**6**
Total	**44**

Table 1: Sample Size of Participants

3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

This study used a qualitative research methodology. As noted previously, the qualitative research methodology is an approach that comprises of several data collecting techniques. According to Creswell (2013, p.160), data collection techniques in qualitative research includes, but not necessarily limited to, interviews, observations, documentary analysis, audio-visual materials, diaries, memoirs, newspapers, biographies, historical documents, and autobiographies. Qualitative researchers can employ any of these techniques to collect data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The present study employed two main techniques collect data. The researcher first used semi-structured or in-depth interviews to gather empirical data. However, in relating the challenge of communicating COVID-19 as a national security threat in Namibia, the researcher relied heavily on secondary data analysis.

The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to explore empirical evidence relating to the challenges of communicating COVID-19 as a national security threat. It was also possible to triangulate the interview results. Triangulation in this context refers to "the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research" (Creswell, 2013, p.629). From this perspective, the researcher was able to review the response of one participant to a question against the response of others to the same question. By so doing, the researcher was able to establish validity of the interview results. In-depth interviews were used because it permits for what Creswell (2003); Creswell and Clark, (2011); and Curtis, (2011, p.31) described as "dialogic exchange" with participants. Holding a form of dialogue with study participants enabled the researcher to gather different perceptions, and ideas or propositions regarding challenges of communicating COVID-19 as a national security threat in Namibia. One perceptible disadvantage of in-depth interview is that it can easily degenerate into mere conversation, especially for researchers who do not possess interviewing skills. The researcher overcame this disadvantage by keeping the conversations short and focused, and through a keen sense of interest in the issue of national security and public safety as enforcement officer as well as listening and analytical skills developed over many years in public relations.

Active listening, observational and analytical skills helped the researcher to make and interpret participants' responses to the questions aimed at answering formulated research questions. The researcher's reliance on active listening, observational and analytical skills closely is in line with the suggestions of Yin (2003, p.2) as well as those of Amin (2005,

p.195). Both Yin (2003) and Amin (2005), proposed that scientific studies should use multiple sources of evidence to generate and analyse data. Thus, the research used, empirical evidence for this study was collected from different primary and secondary sources data.

3.6 SECONDARY DATA

Secondary data was used to contextualise the study within the field of national security and the broader discipline of security and strategic studies. Secondary data was gathered through the non-interactive approach of documentary review. The sources of secondary date included official documents such as the national legislation and policies as well as academic publications in related fields of study relevant to the subject of the study. Review and evaluation of official document sources required a comparison of different yet related documents on national security, health, and information dissemination in the context of Namibia. Comparison of sources was necessary because it helped the researcher to establish and enhance the validity of the study findings. Moreover, the researcher relied on data collected from various research reports and publications by international organisations such World Health Organisation (WHO) and other health as well as security experts on COVID-19 and its implications for health security, and national security in general. The researcher employed content analysis in reviewing and gathering data- from secondary documents as well as in appraising the interview results to verify the extent to which the research questions were met.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Throughout the interview process, the researcher collected a lot of data in raw form. These entailed creating meanings out of the raw data by examining or relating them to the research questions. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the raw data from the interview process. The interviews were audio-recorded and complemented by copious notes in English. Gathered data was organised and analysed according to recommended steps for qualitative data analysis as suggested by Creswell (2013, p.236). Firstly, it was necessary to prepare and organize the data according to the tools used in gathering them. Secondly, the researcher kept the research questions and formulated research questions in focus in doing this. Thirdly, the process of data organisation entailed recording the copious notes made during the interviews and transcribing audio-recorded interviews. Fourthly, transcribing of interviews involved putting down what was said orally into written language. Technically, this is called decontextualizing of the transcripts of the study where conversations which offered significant viewpoints about the challenges of communicating COVID-19 pandemic as a national security challenge appeared.

The researched ensured the validity of the transcripts by being mindful of guidelines on transcription of audio-recorded interviews. Part of the guidelines was verbatim transcription of recorded interviews. This is not to suggest that the recording was clear enough for easy transcription. This was not a straightforward exercise as there were cases in which the audio tapes were inaudible. The researcher took note of these inaudible portions of the audiotapes by numbering them and by replaying and listening to them many times. Follow up efforts were made after the interview process through telephone

calls to study participants for clarifications on what was said or meant. Despite the process of being time-consuming, it was worth it as it helped to ensure the accuracy of the data provided and improvement of the study's validity. The researcher precluded making assumptions about what was said in the inaudible recordings as this could lead the researcher to produce a misleading research report. Moreover, exactitude in data management and analysis was ensured by scrutinising the observational notes made during the interview process.

The research made use of Atlas Ti in organising, structuring, and analysing of interview transcripts. The researcher carefully studied the interview transcripts to develop an in-depth understanding of the raw data. This implied several hours of careful reading, data pruning and note making with the intention of eliminating unnecessary repetitions and data which were not addressing objectives of the study or geared towards answering the research questions as advised by Creswell (2013). Data pruning was by editing of the transcripts. Editing involved checking for and correcting grammatical errors, curtailing, and reshaping long, vague, or ambiguous sentences in order to concisely bring out the actual meaning of what participants said or meant. More so, in editing interview transcripts the researcher ensured select, direct, simplify and transform collected data.

Transcribing of recorded interviews facilitated the coding process. Coding process basically refers to rearrangement or breaking down of data into separate parts and assigning them codes, labels, concepts, names, or thematic headings. This involved going through the data carefully to make sense of study participants' responses to questions

regarding COVID-19, national security, and challenges of communication. Next, the data was summarized into appropriate descriptions and themes of ideas. The third step taken in data analysis involved making themes which reflect broader idea and meanings than ordinary or first coding from the data. The second coding was necessary because it showed how emerging issues regarding COVID-19 pandemic, national security and communication were interconnected.

The fourth step in data analysis of the study involved the explanation of findings in line with research objectives and formulated questions. In this case, the researcher was mindful of personal views and reviews in comparisons with previous studies or extant literature.

3.8 TECHNICAL AND QUALITY ISSUES

Technical and quality issues refer to scientific processes which indicate how findings result from data collection techniques and formulated guiding research questions as Lohr (2004) notes. This aspect of scientific study is also described as the rigour of academic research as suggested by Morse, *et al*, (2002, 14). Thus, to confirm the rigour of this study, the propositions of Creswell (2013) as confirmed by Neuman (2014) were strictly followed. These propositions according to Neuman (2014) are four, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Although there are several strategies developed to determine each of these characteristics, scholars generally agree on "audit trail, and member checks during coding, confirmation of results with study participants, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, structural corroboration, and referential material adequacy" (Neuman 2014) as tested strategies. Thus, in determining the rigour or

reliability and trustworthiness of the findings of this study, the researcher made use of triangulation, reflexivity, prolonged engagement and member checks. These methods are briefly discussed in the sections that follow.

3.8.1 Triangulation

In the context of this study, the application of the method of triangulation simply implies that data on issues of national security threats, COVID-19 and challenges of communication were gathered from different sources; employing different methods and analysed from different theoretical perspectives (Neuman, 2011, p.150). The researcher made use of four types of triangulations. The first was triangulation of data. This means that data for this study was collected from different sources and carefully compared. The second was triangulation of researchers. This means the use of use of different researchers on the researchers' team to collect data. The third was the triangulation of theories. This means the use of multiple perspectives to interpret the results of a study. The fourth type triangulation used was triangulation of methods. This is the application of mixed methods-quantitative and qualitative methodologies. This study specifically utilized triangulation of data collection sources, triangulation of theories and triangulation within methods to establish the reliability and validity of its findings.

Accordingly, this study used in-depth or semi-structured interviews with multiple stakeholders or institutions to collect data. The method of in-depth or structured interviews was complemented by analysis of secondary sources of data on issues relating to national security threats, COVID-19 pandemic, and communication challenges. Although

responses to interview questions by study participants varied remarkably, using triangulation of sources and methods the researcher was able to demonstrate similarity and contrasts on emerging themes. Data gathered from in-depth interviews and those gathered from documentary review were placed side-by-side, then compared. This was done with the intention of checking for stability or accuracy and similarity of interviewees' responses through repeated questioning during the interview.

There is general agreement among scholars that data gathered from different sources and using different methods have a higher degree of accuracy than those gathered from one source and using a single method. Thus, data gathered using the method of triangulation increases the confidence level of qualitative research findings. The method of triangulation was mostly used in this study to resolve contradictions arose during data collection, analysis of results and findings. The crosschecking of responses to questions across study participants which unique to triangulation method encourages fairness in the interpretation of interview results.

3.8.2 Reflexivity

The researcher employed reflexivity as a strategy to enhance the reliability and validity or rigour of the study. Creswell (2013) describes reflexivity in qualitative research as likely influence of bias or specific ways of thinking over the research process. Researchers are often influenced by a lot of issues such as interests, expectations, perceptions, and theoretical persuasions as well as political, socio-cultural factors, historical antecedents, race, gender, class, and age during research. Thus, Nadin and Cassell (2006) as well as

Neuman (2011), advised that it is imperative that researcher declare or acknowledge their personal biases. This is because being aware of these is critically important to determining the reliability and validity of research findings. Through reflexivity the researcher, acknowledged, disclosed, critically examined, and reflected on ways and manners in which unconsciously internalized beliefs; values and intellectual orientations could influence the research process and findings.

Awareness and disclosure of existing beliefs, values and orientations which could influence research findings raises the question of researcher's neutrality in qualitative research compared to quantitative research. In quantitative studies, neutrality is common because natural science research involve stable physical objectives or realities and researchers are physically detached from objects being studied. This does not apply to qualitative research. As a result, it was critical for the researcher to disclose her reflexive position for reviewers of the study to understand possible stances that may have influenced the study findings.

The disclosing of reflexive position by the researcher is in line with the submission of Wolcott (2010, p.36). Accordingly, Wolcott (2010), points out that consumers of qualitative and quantitative research findings have the right to know about the investigators; understand their interests and motivations around issues or subjects of their study, to whom they report, and what they stand to gain personally from their study (Wolcott, 2010: p.36). The scholar further argues that disclosure of a researcher's reflexive position is important because internalised theoretical persuasions have the

capacity to unduly influence a researcher's interpretation of research findings. In this regard, the revealing of a researcher's subjective beliefs is critical to determining the credibility of research findings.

Reflexivity also involves a detailed description of how the research process unfolded. To know and maintain reflexivity, the researcher followed approaches to reflexivity as offered by Lincoln and Neuman (2014). This involves the keeping of a journal or diary in which the researcher recorded daily experiences. Secondly, the researcher maintained a methodology log in which decisions regarding methods chosen and reasons for their choice were recorded. The journal or diary was critical in writing down the researcher's thoughts, feelings, ideas, and hypotheses formulated as she interacted with study participants. Doing this, enabled the researcher to conduct effective self-audit.

The requirement of reflexivity ensures that the researcher's professional, political, socio-cultural, and intellectual orientations were revealed to study participants. This was necessary because study participants needed to know that the researcher is a member of NAMPOL and specifically interested in communication strategies, public health, and national security and public safety and security.

The researcher revealed the reasons for carrying out research into the challenges of communicating COVID-19 pandemic as national security issue in the aims and objectives of the study. Study participants were equally informed that the researcher had both personal and institutional interest in the subject as a member of NAMPOL. It was also

against the background of pre-existing knowledge of challenges of communicating COVID-19 pandemic as a national security threat that prompted or motivated the researcher to embark on the study. Thus, the researcher focused on gaining clarity on views expressed by respondents by keeping the interviews focused on COVID-19, national security, and communication challenges. Thus, through self-reflection, the researcher was able to keep her pre-knowledge and experience in check throughout the study.

The researcher made use of diary as a tool for self-reflection. The diary was electronic in form. Precisely, it was a smart mobile phone with diary features. The researcher used it to keep record of scheduled appointments, office locations of study participants, venues for interviews, email addresses and phone numbers of study participants. The diary system was critical in keeping a systematic track of the data gathering process and in finding aspects of the study which required reorganisation or removal altogether.

The idea of keeping track of the research process showed the study's epistemological observance of realist theoretical proposition. Realism proposes that researcher look for national interests requiring protection by the state. Thus, diary method helped the researcher to sympathetically note the methodological issues such as how the interviews unfolded; to reflect on the quality of responses, as well as the emotional state, assumptions, values, and beliefs and how these influenced interpretations at every stage of the research process.

Reflexivity in this study started with a truthful expression or reflection on the researcher's professional training as well as intellectual background as a member of NAMPOL. Awareness of this directed the entire research process. Follow up questions made during interview processes were minimal and intended to prevent digression from the focus of the study. This was needed because the researcher did not want to appear as overbearing or seen as pushing a different agenda other than academic. The participants were assured and reassured that the study was specifically for academic purposes and informed consent form which they signed assured they were participating in the study voluntarily and could withdraw at any time. Being a member of NAMPOL was advantageous in some ways in the study. This is because it helped in building rapport easily with the study participants. Cautious formulation of interview questions with the assistant of study supervisor and paying of attention to how the questions were asked helped the researcher to limit the chances of misinterpretation of intentions.

3.8.3 Prolonged Engagement

The researcher used the method of prolonged engagement to ensure reliability and rigour of the study. It involved gathering of data over a period. Prolonged engagement was necessary in this study because of four factors. The first factor was rescheduling of appointments. During data collection stage of the study, interview appointments were scheduled, cancelled, and rescheduled based on the availability and willingness of participants to be interviewed. The second factor was delay in the issuance of ethical clearance from UNAM. The third factor was inaudible parts of recorded interviews. The fourth factor concerned work related matters and other activities. These factors meant that

data collection spanned a long period of time and resulted in study participants being visited severally to convince them to participate in the study. During this time, the researcher, engaged and built good rapport with study participants as well as gain in-depth knowledge about national security threat perceptions through formal and informal interactions with experts.

The research was able to build good rapport with participants by keeping in touch through extended phone calls, emails, visits, and discussions with study. The importance of prolonged engagement to this study is that it helped the researcher to identify recurrent patterns of perceptions and interpretations of facts. Although the researcher kept in touch with study participants and was submerged in their world to a reasonable extent, efforts were made to prevent close interactions from compromising the interpretation of the findings. In this regard, the researcher's experience NAMPOL member was never confused with those of study participants. Closeness and rapport with both colleagues and study participants did not affect the researcher's ability to study challenges of communicating COVID-19 pandemic as a national security threat.

3.8.4 Member Checks

By member check, the researcher refers to the process of going back to study participants for confirmation verification, testing of data, preliminary analytical categories, formulated assumptions and interpretation of research findings (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007). The researcher employed two known methods of member check as proposed by Shenton (2004). In this regard, iterative questioning was used. Iterative questioning established the

accuracy of information on the spot during in-depth interviews. The researcher achieved this through repeated questioning or probing/interjections. Respondents were asked to repeat their answers or to provide more clarity on them. At other times the researcher rephrased interview questions differently to test the understanding of respondents as well as determine consistency of answers. Through this method the researcher detected contradictory statements or information and inconsistent answers, and subsequent removal of suspect data. Detection and removal of suspect of data during the interviews enabled the researcher to condense and interpret the meaning of what the respondents expressed. Interjectory questions were intended to confirm or reject the answer and to establish authenticity on the spot.

While diary keeping and audio recording enabled the researcher to capture data during in-depth interviews, these methods were still limited in some ways. For instance, information in the diary were not detailed and some parts of audio-recordings were audible enough. This prompted the use of the second method of member check, which involved physically going back to study participants who can easily be reached, or contacting those who cannot easily be reached electronically for clarifications or confirmation of interpreted answers. This second method of member check was possible because the researcher is a member of the security cluster. Thus, being a member of the security cluster offered the researcher with some advantages as well as disadvantages. The disadvantage came in the form of suspicion of the intentions of the study. Withdrawals and reluctance to participate in the study by some members of staff of the NDF and NAMPOL were largely informed by suspicion and mistrust. On the other hand, being a “colleague” in the security cluster

enabled the researcher to have access to the study locales or and knowing information-rich participants at official capacity.

Thus, to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings of this study; the researcher went back severally to the study participants to confirm and test findings. Going back to participants was possible because the researcher was not seriously constrained by financial limitations, logistics, and unavailability of participants due to distance after interviews. The benefits of member check can be summarized in three ways. Firstly, the approach created opportunity for study participants to ruminate on their responses to interview questions and to provide additional information. Secondly, the approach permitted the researcher to keep all participants on record, and thirdly, it provided extra motivation to the researcher to confidently summarize and categorize the data.

3.9 GENERALIZABILITY

In determining the generalizability of this study, the researcher was mindful of Creswell's (2013), description of the concept as the extent to which study findings are extra palatable or replicable elsewhere given similar situations as well as Yin's (2004: p.119), claims. Yin (2004) cautions against broad generalizations from a particular study. Specifically, Yin claims that broad generalizations from one study cannot be extrapolated or replicated in its entirety. Nevertheless, research in the field of security and strategic studies in different places has shown that certain fundamental values tend to be present and applicable in national security formulation and threats assessment and communication challenges. While this study focused on the challenges faced by Namibian security actors

in articulating and communicating of COVID-19 as a national security threat, its findings may be partially replicable in other countries given similar circumstances or conditions.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

This study observed the highest ethical standard. Creswell (2013, Pg.230), relates ethics to issues about "right and wrong" or the method, procedure, or perspective for deciding how to act when evaluating difficult problems or situations. Patton (2002) submits that general ethical issues in research include confidentiality, informed consent and data access and ownership. These ethical issues were encountered in three discernible stages of this study, namely, at the beginning of the study; during data collection and analysis; and report writing stages. This confirmed the observations of Creswell (2013).

Thus, the beginning of the study involved the approval of the research proposal by the supervisor and the postgraduate committee of UNAM, Windhoek. This was followed by application for ethical clearance from the ethics committee of UNAM. Obtaining of ethical clearance for this study was important because the study involved human interactions. To obtain ethical clearance from UNAM, the research proposal provided detailed description of the study's feasibility, methodology for data collection and analysis as well as approaches to protect the identity and responses of study participants. Informed consent was the first ethical issue encountered and observed in this study. It manifested due to the use of in-depth interviews for primary data collection. Informed consent relates to study participants being provided with sufficient information about the study, its purpose, aims and objectives, and interview questions to help them decide whether to

participate in the study or not. Informed consent was voluntarily and verbally obtained from study participants. The nitty-gritty of informed consent was to prove that the study participants exercised reasonable degree of influence or agency over the study process.

At the data collection and analysis stage, it was necessary to carefully explain to study participants the likely costs and benefits of the study to help them make decision regarding participation in the study. As a member of NAMPOL, the researcher shared her understanding and experience of national, public safety and security as well as communication challenges in the context of Namibian. In doing this, the researcher specifically, aimed at making the study participants understand that neither them nor the researcher stand to benefit financially or otherwise from the study. Nevertheless, as the motivation for the study was to contribute to national security policy making and countering of national security threats such as COVID-19 pandemic in Namibia, participants stand to gain indirectly from the findings of the study and its recommendations.

Getting informed consent of study participants necessitated that, the researcher protects the privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of the study participants as advised by Sieber and Tolich (2013, p.154). These scholars describe privacy as “control over others” access to oneself and associated information and preservation of boundaries against giving protected information or receiving unwanted information”. The researcher observed confidentiality by respecting legal restraints and arrangements between the researcher and study participants on how data provided the researcher could or could not be used both

during and after the research. The researcher saved interview transcripts using a password in order prevent authorized access to the data. Similarly, the researcher respected the principle of anonymity by removing identifiers, symbols, indicators, or information that could reveal which study participant provided which information. This is in line with the recommendations of Sieber and Tolich (2013, p.155).

Research ethics were also respected at the report writing stage of this study, specifically, in the presentation of interview of results, the researcher avoided personal opinions or viewpoints which could be traced back to study participants. Consequently, after data collection, statements or phrases easily connected to any of the participants were removed or hidden away in presentation. As the study participants were mostly belonging to the security cluster; the researcher ensured that their identities, offices, departments, and positions were protected as required by ethics. The researcher further protected the identities of study participants by ensuring that, responses to interview questions were not linked to them. In this regard, pseudonyms such as “respondent” or “participant” were used throughout coding and reporting stages. Oral interviews were stored in the form of audio files. Transcribed interviews were saved in word document format and protected by a password. The researcher ensured that besides her, only the thesis supervisor had access to the files.

In the collection of data from secondary sources, the researcher ensured that double quotation marks were used to indicate borrowed expressions; verbatim citations were

indented, and exact page numbers, authors' names, and title of materials were corrected provided in the body of the work as well as in the reference list.

3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the research methodology employed in this study. The study employed the qualitative research methodology. The researcher justified the use of qualitative methodology in the study by stating the study sought "soft data" and not "hard data" on challenges of communicating COVID-19 as a national security issue in Namibia. Both strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research methodology were highlighted and discussed. Since qualitative research methodology involves different data gathering methods, the researcher detailed exact data gathering tools used in the study. In this regard, a detailed account of semi-structured or in-depth interviews was provided. Equally, discussed in the chapter was content analysis of relevant documents reviewed for secondary data collection as well as strategies employed in data analysis.

Finally, the chapter described how ethical clearance was sought and obtained from UNAM to undertake the study. Consequently, ethical issues observed in the study were highlighted and discussed. These included informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. These were carefully observed in four stages, namely, at the beginning of the study, data collecting stage, and reporting stage. The next chapter of the study will provide an analysis of interview results.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Respondents revealed that one of the factors affecting the communication of COVID-19 as a security threat was lack of resources. Communities in Namibia's remote areas that do not have access to newspapers, radios, or televisions were left out and did not receive COVID-19 messages. Unemployment and poverty in the country, presented communication challenges because the poor and unemployed were more concerned with their survival than with COVID-19 as a disease and a national security threat. There were also flaws in communicating messages about COVID-19 in a much broader manner to reach all members of society, as well as in the vernaculars that they understand. As a result, understanding and appreciating the concept of national security was difficult.

The global spread of COVID-19 has also been accompanied by a wave of misinformation, undermining government' responses and increasing citizen distrust and concern. The lack of authentic scientific information that came from domestic scientists and experts left room for misinformation. The misinformation, which is false or inaccurate information, regarding COVID-19 stems primarily from unproven medical treatments, prevention techniques, and other information that flooded the social media and being disseminated by users whose concerns were reinforced by the overwhelming volume of conflicting information. The public was left unsure of which COVID-19 information to trust or which sources of information to rely on. The other challenge was that citizens' lack of trust in the political leadership and where medical experts and law enforcement agencies were seen

and or perceived to be associated with political power houses, the reliability of any information and communication became a challenge. The government must therefore be a source of verified, transparent, continuous, and rapid information disseminated through official channels to combat misinformation and lack of trust. Any gaps in official COVID-19 information can be filled with false information, which breeds distrust.

This chapter focuses on the data analysis and empirical findings of this study. As stated in the preceding chapter on methodology, data for this study was gathered through semi-structured questionnaire, content analysis of relevant secondary documents, and general observation of the environment to supplement understanding. The study ensured the validity of its findings by making frequent references to respondents' perspectives and theoretical propositions in the existing literature. Data was gathered from a total of 44 specifically targeted participants. The sample population was selected from the following organisations: NAMPOL, Presidency, NDF, MOHSS, Immigration and Correctional Services and the Media who are part of the key institutions involved in the handling, response as well as information dissemination of the pandemic.

Data analysis, in general, is the search for patterns in data, such as recurring behaviour, objects, phases, or ideas. Data analysis includes examining, sorting, categorizing, evaluating, comparing, synthesizing, and contemplating the coded data, as well as reviewing the raw and recorded data (Neuman, 2011a, p. 517). The researcher must read and reread data notes, reflect on what is read, and draw conclusions based on logic and judgment in qualitative analysis, (Neuman, 2006). To gain a better understanding of the

subject study, we must go beyond statistical correlations and use qualitative sources of information.

As a result, the researcher conducted interviews and informal background discussions with selected experts as well as media personnel. The open-ended questions provided comparable qualitative data while also allowing opportunities to identify new ways of understanding the topic. The interview guide was created using questions that were identified as meaningful in previous informal interviews and extensive research. The researcher carefully examined the feedback from the participants to avoid misinterpretation and sensitive meanings.

The key point is to keep objectivity between the researcher's point of view and the data collected. The researcher attempted to analyse the data as objectively as possible, so that personal preferences did not influence the results.

The analysis was guided by the five questions which were used in the questionnaire and discussed in the following sections.

4.1.1 COVID-19 poses security risks to Namibia.

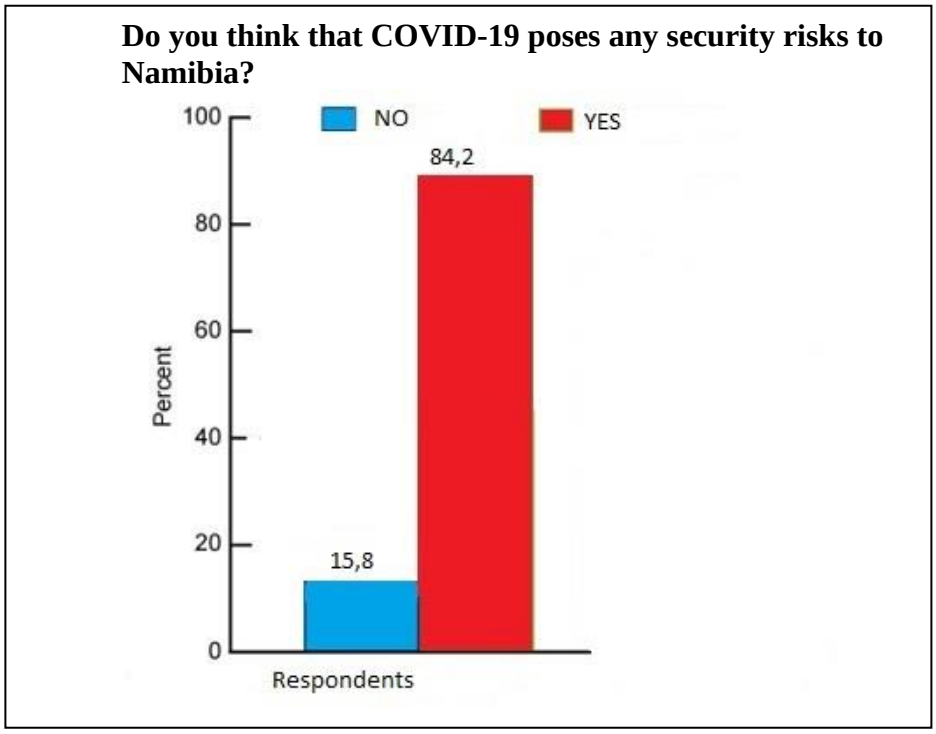

Figure 0.1: Respondents response to the first question

4.1.1.1 COVID-19 poses consequences on the security of the country.

More than 80% of the respondents agreed that COVID-19 indeed posed security risks to Namibia, just like it posed a risk world-wide. It has posed a risk in the health infrastructure and socio-economic capacities of the country because when a population is sick, it is not productive and thus a threat to food security and economic sustainability.

COVID-19 also poses security risk in the form of the healthcare system being overwhelmed by a significant increase in hospitalization, thus compromising on public health /population health. Thus, once those who make decisions become affected, the country may be exposed to other various forms of security risks.

Respondent 1 and 2 who agreed, raised the concern that other crimes began to thrive because of the pandemic as they went unchecked. One of the respondents stated that "This is because certain crimes go unnoticed. Crimes like gender-based violence increased during the pandemic but we will never know to what extent… despite the statistics showing that crime decreased, we will never know the true reality on the ground", stated a student respondent. In summary these respondents asserted that national security is influenced not only by politics, but also by the economy, culture, people's welfare, and environmental safety, among other things. Environmental degradation and climate change, infectious disease (including COVID-19), terrorism, transnational crime, and illegal migration are all considered as security issues. COVID-19 has had a direct impact on the country's economic security by causing unfavourable changes to the economy leading to high bank interest rates, high unemployment rate and ultimately social unrest and thus compromising national security. In Namibia, with measures to curb the spread of COVID-19 being ignored by many people, this becomes a security threat as those not complying may be deemed as posing risk to the general population.

4.1.1.2 COVID-19 does not have consequences on the security of the country.

Of the 15% that disagreed, argued that the pandemic is rather a public health risk which does not have consequences on the security of the country. Respondent 10 as well as Respondent 25, argued that "the coronavirus may not be a threat that the military should be deployed as the virus is invisible, but for keeping law and order especially monitoring the compliance with health protocols such as wearing masks and social distancing. Arguably, COVID-19 could be considered a non-traditional threat- a shapeless, evolving,

and invisible ‘enemy’ that multiplies without intent and without discriminating. While the combating of a pandemic may not require guns and ammunitions, when the safety and welfare of the entire nation is endangered by a lethal threat, the situation may be considered as a matter of national security”, says one of the study respondents who disagreed on COVID-19 posing a national security threat.

Another respondent argued that by saying COVID-19 poses a national security threat and that would imply that only Namibians would be the targets, as such the global pandemic cannot be viewed as national threat. They further argued that the great deal of unpreparedness by the government when the disease broke out in March 2020 in Namibia should not be confused as threat to security, if the government had basic preparedness, they would not consider the pandemic as a security threat. “This resulted to panic measures being adopted by the government and a few people, and that on its own is what created uncertainty and panic on security” said one of the respondents.

From the above respondents’ assertions, COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates how non-military factors can destabilize, if not completely paralyze entire societies and countries. It is an important validation of society, as well as an opportunity to test the effectiveness of state administration. The pandemic broadens our understanding of major security issue which we cannot afford to ignore as a country.

4.1.2 The government communicating COVID-19 as a national security threat.

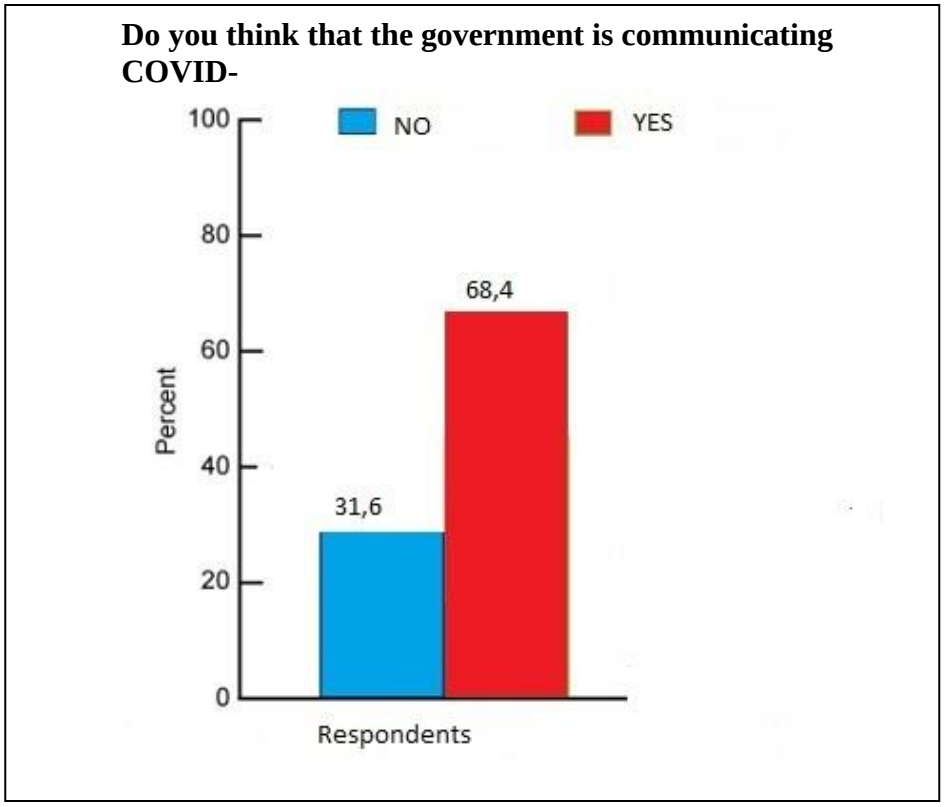

Figure 0.2: Respondents response to the second question

a) *The government has been communicating COVID-19 as a national security* threat.

On questions to determine the challenges faced by the government in communicating COVID-19 as a national security threat, 68% of the respondents (30 respondents) indicated that the government has been communicating through launching the COVID-19 Communication Centre (previously known as the Government Information Centre), which was something never done before for other disease outbreaks. The COVID-19 Communication Centre provides was a platform for all sectors to engage the public on key issues relating to the COVID-19 lock-down guidelines. The Centre was interactive, with journalists able to ask questions during the daily live press conference and via a dedicated

email address. Information on COVID-19 was shared on different platform and in different Namibian vernaculars daily on national radio and television. Respondent 38 in particular stated,

> *"Yes, the instant creation of the COVID-19 Communication Centre, demonstrated how seriously the government views the pandemic. Moreover, many platforms on the public broadcaster as well as regular presidential briefings, helped to spread the message around the urgency, severity, scope, and magnitude of the pandemic".*

In support of Respondent 38 another respondent (Respondent 40) emphasized that, "the Government responded to the outbreak of COVID-19 promptly, established the coordinated security cluster team, amongst others and the government is keeping the public updated regularly with relevant information related to the pandemic through relevant offices".

In summary, the current unpredictability of the COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the importance of civil preparedness, crisis management, and maintaining of state defence readiness and this was achieved through communication. Responses from the study on communication and national security aligns closely with Roy et al, (2020), who maintained that the pandemic basically affects all people (not just the sick) because it had a great impact on people's lives in general.

b) *The government has not been communicating COVID-19 as a national security threat.*

Despite agreement by most respondents on early interventions of the Namibian government, Respondent 15 state that, *"No, it is not. The government is not saying it directly, but* that the pandemic is an economic threat". However, both respondents were contradicted by Respondent 28, who stated, that *"No, government has been more focused on ensuring that citizens comply with the national public health measures as well as getting vaccinated against COVID-19 and not national security".*

Some of the respondents contended that COVID-19 was being communicated by the government as a health risk more than anything. One respondent contended that, "because communication by the government emphasized the dangers of COVID-19 to the population in terms of severe illness, costly hospitalization, and deaths as well as the negative impact on economic productivity. The aspect of COVID-19 as a national security threat are explained however without explicitly using the term -national".

In a nutshell these respondents saw the Government not having been able to separate or breakdown the domino effect of COVID-19, encompasses the national security issue, and explain to the public. COVID-19, in a short period of time, posed an unknown threat to the health sector, economy, and social cohesion of societies, eliciting an emergency response comparable to military actions.

4.1.3 Namibians understanding of COVID-19 as a national security threat.

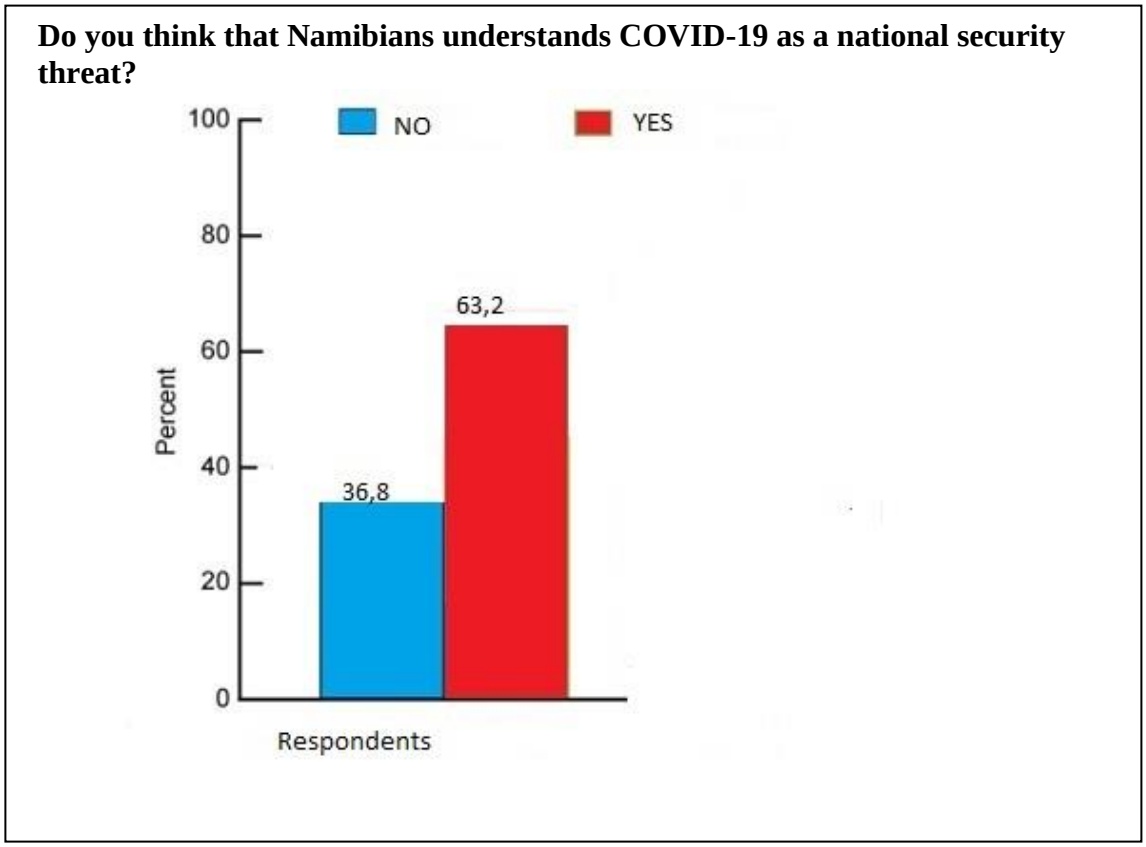

Figure 0.3: Respondents response to the third question

From the study, 63% of the respondents (28 respondents) did not agree that Namibians understand COVID-19 as a national security threat because they are taking all precautions as laid out to avoid the further spread of the virus and adherence to the regulations is observed.

In this regard, Respondent 7 expressed the view that:

> *"Yes, Namibians have seen a lot of deaths and have welcomed the measures taken by the state…it was not easy at first when the regulations were introduced…lockdown and curfew were meant to protect because it was one of the effective ways used against the threat. Knowing that the views came*

from outside a united front was needed hence, many Namibians if not all understands COVID-19 as a national security threat. Jobs lost in the tourism sector was a big blow for the country which was felt by many Namibians".

a) No, Namibians understood COVID-19 as a national security threat.

Interestingly, Respondent 3 strongly maintained that *"…the discourse about COVID-19 had been confined to social issues and the vaccines. No one had been able to venture into the national security issue so far".* This respondent's point of view was supported by Respondent 18 as well:

"People do not think that COVID-19 is a security treat but rather a health issue, because it does not involve violence like other traditional security threats such as war".

Some of the respondents such as Respondent 2, 11, 30, and 35 maintained that they do not see the pandemic as a threat, as it has been classified by global authorities such as WHO and UN as a global threat that impacts all layers of society in the world and that includes Namibia, therefore it cannot be a national security issue when it comes to Namibia alone.

COVID-19 has revealed the weaknesses in government capabilities and information policy. Importantly, it demonstrates the need for a rethinking of national security perceptions. The coronavirus demonstrated that equating security with the size of the military or police force is deceptive. As it turned out, a pandemic that is difficult to combat with conventional weapons may be a greater threat to humanity.

4.1.4 The challenges of communicating COVID-19 as national security threat to Namibia?

Respondents in the study, stated that cultural beliefs and religious convictions, also jeopardized the effectiveness of COVID-19 information and awareness campaign efforts by the government and health authorities. Thus, Respondent 19 pointed out that *"A lack of comprehension of the seriousness of the COVID-19, cultural and religious beliefs, has led too many to shut their ears to COVID-19 information given out".* This made it difficult for authorities to communicate COVID-19 as a security threat to the public. Respondent 21, 26 and 29 also highlighted that, some communities in the country believed that COVID-19 primarily affects people in towns and cities, whereas some religious leaders have told their followers that COVID-19 is a devil's creation and that nothing can harm them if they believe in God. This in the end resulted in the conclusion that the government and public health agencies' communication of COVID-19 information was insufficient to build and sustain the understanding of the security threats posed by the pandemic.

Considering the respondents' assertions, communication about COVID-19 should be two-way with a feedback mechanism, provide citizens with truthful and accurate information, and engage citizens in collective response for it to be effective.

As stated by Fairbanks, Plowman, & Rawlins, (2007), this two-way process would facilitate more support and cooperation between government departments and the public when it is truly needed, thereby assisting stakeholders to work together to cope with emergencies under highly stressful circumstances. Stakeholders must have faith in the information provided to respond confidently to a crisis. Because stakeholders such as government officers, experts, and the public have different professional and cultural

backgrounds, as well as different perceptions of risk and behaviour, mutual trust must be strengthened for effective risk management. If stakeholders have faith in the information they receive, they are more likely to make sound decisions to avoid risks (Mishra, 1996).

Any delays in sharing vital information regarding the pandemic can cause significant distrust in the country and this can arguably contribute to an ineffective response, defiance and thereby potentially posing security risks.

4.1.5 Remedial measures to improve communication of COVID-19 as a national security threat.

Respondents in the study identified some corrective measures they believed were necessary in improving communication about COVID-19 as a national security threat. Among the remedies is the deployment of well-trained health personnel to conduct public awareness campaigns and spread clear and consistent messages about COVID-19 and its impact on national security. Another preventative measure highlighted, was to make information easily accessible so that incorrect information does not become biblical truth. All social media platforms should be used to reach out to youth, in particular, with customized messages that are relevant to them. This was succinctly expressed by Respondent 43 as follows *"Simplifying the language and or terminologies used in communicating messages. Putting more efforts on spreading messages in versions vernaculars including to those suffering from hearing impairment. Dispel wrong beliefs about COVID-19".*

4.2 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter analysed data collected through semi-structure, in-depth interviews with a sample population drawn mainly from the health personnel, security sector, information ministry and the media. The semi-structured interview was designed to determine the challenges of communicating COVID-19 as national security issue.

COVID-19 had a significant impact on the Namibian society. The community was tense during the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak. Because of a lack of reliable official information, widespread tales about the epidemic situation spread via word of mouth, mobile phone short messages, social media transmission, and other means. The spread of various rumours exacerbated the spread of social panic, resulting into an increase in panic with some people not allowing visitors, buying of groceries, medicines, and home remedy products such as detergents, garlic, ginger, and lemons becoming expensive and scarce on the market. The government and those in authority must ensure that the right information reaches the public to create the desired awareness around the pandemic and national security.

The COVID-19 pandemic represented serious public health emergency crisis events in Namibia as it was to the rest of the world, and both had a very large impact on health, society, economy and security issues. At the beginning of the pandemic control efforts for the pandemic by the Government in Namibia were rather slow to be mobilized and generally considered to be sub-optimal, as the poor handling of COVID-19 exposed serious information communication problems in the then emergency management system processes. But later in 2021 government's response to COVID-19 became more

transparent than it was in the outbreak stages. Certain health protocols and or regulations were relaxed, progress had been made in information disclosure and epidemic surveillance, as lack of information during an emergency of such proportions creates panic and security risks in the society.

Adequate and timeous communication has enhanced the response to the management of public health emergencies and helps reduce any risks. During a pandemic such as COVID-19, lack of information and disinformation have the potential to polarize society members' views and foster distrust of government actions. The way members of society choose their actions and responses to disinformation reveals a lot about how effectively governments, in collaboration with communities, ensure national security.

The next chapter will focus on summary of the chapters, evaluation of the research questions, conclusion and broad recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

EVALUATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 global pandemic has fundamentally affected nearly every area of life, and Namibia was no exception. Considering that the COVID-19 pandemic was a new virus, detected in 2020, this study discussed the challenges of communicating the virus as a national security problem in Namibia, focusing on three main research questions. The study ensured the validity of its findings by making frequent references to respondents' perspectives and theoretical propositions in the existing literature. Communication is critical during pandemics because it enables cooperation, resource sharing, quality policy development, and critical strategies to deal with the crisis. Chapter five provides a summary of the previous chapters (1- 4), evaluates the research questions vis-à-vis the key findings of the study, and provides a conclusion and recommendations on how to resolve challenges of communicating global pandemics such as COVID-19 as a national security issue in Namibia.

5.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

Chapter one laid the groundwork for this investigation. It focused on the research background and rationale, scope and objectives, research methodology, and thesis structure.

The study's first chapter provided an overview of COVID-19 as a national security threat in Namibia. Given that the COVID-19 pandemic virus was only discovered in 2020, the

number of studies on the virus's global impact is still in its early stages. While the majority of COVID-19 research is country-specific, the national security threat that it poses to countries is only now being investigated. What is still missing from this growing body of literature is how effective communication about the potential national security risk of COVID-19 can help to mitigate the virus's impact on countries.

Chapter two, focused on literature review. Scholarly literature on critical issues of communication or measures, such as scholars' perspectives, news bulletins and government publications, infomercials, and others, were reviewed for this purpose. The specific goal of the literature review was to provide in-depth knowledge of what has been done in the fields of strategic communication, national security, and securitization, as well as to build an academic case for the study. When reviewing the existing literature, much focus was on areas of agreement and disagreement among leading scholars regarding the COVID-19 pandemic as a national security threat. The literature review is structured around the research questions of the study and emerging themes from the literature.

Despite the international community's growing recognition of the necessity and importance of communication during pandemics, Namibia faced significant challenges in communicating COVID-19 pandemic as a national security threat. Communication during pandemics necessitates collaboration and information sharing among various stakeholders. Developing suitable response to public health emergency further necessitates extensive information sharing and collaboration among all stakeholders. The COVID-19 outbreak highlighted the importance of collaboration among those responsible for national security.

Chapter three of the study discussed its methodology. This entails the research strategies and design, procedures, population, data collection analysis methods, and data credibility. Overall, the chapter concentrated on explaining how the study was conducted to answer the main and secondary research questions formulated in the chapter one.

The research methodology used was mainly qualitative. The qualitative methods used to collect data were questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and documentary review. The qualitative design enabled the research to gain a deeper understanding of and relationships between communication and national security issues caused by the pandemic.

Chapter four focused on data analysis. Interview results were analysed in relations to research questions. Data analysis was thematically presented. In this regard major findings of the study with specific reference to security issues surrounding communication during the COVID-19 pandemic in Namibia were highlighted and discussed.

The analysis showed that Namibia was challenged with respect to planning, acceptance, and public involvement as a critical stakeholder. According to the study findings, collaboration is essential in the decision-making process for public health crisis management. The findings also indicated that effective communication of COVID-19 threats to national security was critical in fighting the virus.

5.3 EVALUATION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study reflects on communication during COVID-19 in Namibia, revealing how communication is critical in fighting pandemic outbreaks through quick decision-making.

Thus, it is imperative to examine the extent to which the research questions were answered.

5.3.1. Research Question 1.

To what extent is the COVID-19 pandemic communicated as a national security threat in Namibia?

On 17 March 2020, at the peak of COVID-19 pandemic, President Hage Geingob in recognition of the danger posed by the pandemic to Namibia's national security declared: "The lives of our people are of paramount importance, and cabinet has decided we should declare a state of emergency". Geingob's declaration resonated with the idea of security in general. Security refers to "the pursuit of freedom from threat and the ability of states and societies to maintain their independent identity and their functional integrity against forces of change, which they see as hostile. Thus, the bottom line of security is survival, but it also reasonably includes a substantial range of concerns about the conditions of existence" (Buzan 1991). From Buzan (1991), assertion it is obvious that national security is a multidimensional process whose purpose is the protection of national values. The most important values of any state are its survival, people, and territory. Succinctly put, COVID-19 outbreak threatened Namibia's self-preservation and self-perpetuation as a nation and thus required extra ordinary measures to combat.

More specifically, the government of Namibia enacted legislation requiring (a) compulsory clinical and laboratory medical examination, health monitoring, medication,

and hospitalization of persons suspected of directly or indirectly transmitting the disease; (b) enforcement of preventive health checks and laboratory tests at all or individual points of entry through the country; (c) temporary lockdown of the operation of schools and all kinds of educational structures, institutions and bodies, public and private, of any type and degree, places of religious worship, and temporary prohibition; (d) temporary lockdown of the operation of theatres, cinemas, sports and show events. Most, if not all these measures had human rights implications. However, during periods of national emergencies, human rights are suspended (*The Namibian*, 2020)

The establishment of a COVID-19 Communication Centre provided a platform for all sectors to engage the public on key issues affecting their respective sectors in relation to the COVID-19 further demonstrated the articulation of the pandemic as a national security threat. National emergency measures such as lock-down, closure of national borders, imposition of curfew, deployment joint task team involving the security cluster demonstrated that the Namibian government considered COVID-19 pandemic as a national security threat.

The provision of daily, weekly, and monthly briefings on COVID-19/security situation in the country also accentuates the fact that the pandemic constituted a security threat to Namibia. A multi-sectoral national coordination mechanism that was established and gradually expanded to include senior leadership from all government ministries, led by the Secretary to Cabinet was another demonstration of the government's articulation of COVID-19 pandemic as a national security threat. Soon after the first officially reported case of COVID-19 infection in Namibia, COVID-19 was securitized. The international

death toll and the spread of infections globally prompted emergency measures in Namibia as a preventive measure. Indeed, rising global COVID-19 case numbers alarmed the Namibian government, prompting a preventive securitization process precipitated by the President of the Republic whose pronouncement on COVID-19 were amplified by other actors such as the Minister of Health and Social Services, Minister of Justice, and Attorney General of Namibia. Based on the actions of the Namibian government as highlighted and discussed, it can be reasonably concluded that COVID-19 pandemic, to a large extent, was communicated as a national security threat in Namibia.

5.2.3 Research Question 2

What are the challenges of communicating COVID-19 as an existential security threat to Namibia?

Several challenges were associated with the fight against COVID pandemic in Namibia. Findings from the study shows that among the challenges of communicating COVID-19 as a national security threat, was the lack of transparent and adequate information sharing regarding the virus from the government, especially as the beginning. The study revealed that information on COVID-19 was not easily accessible in Namibia, resulting in incorrect information becoming the 'truth' and compromising national security. Wang et al. (2019), attest to this, by identifying a new aspect of the COVID-19 threat to national security. They specifically argued that one of the threats posed by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is information security, citing the flood of false information on the pandemic on social media. This is relevant to the context of Namibia as COVID-19 had a profound impact on Namibian society. During the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak, the

community was tense due to a lack of trustworthy official information, widespread stories about the epidemic situation spread via word of mouth and social media. The spread of various unauthenticated pandemic information exacerbated the spread of social panic, which in a way contributed to national security threat. The government had to be proactive in combating false/fake information on the pandemic.

For example, it was communicated earlier that there was no human-human transmission of the virus (WHO 2019). Later it was discovered that the virus was transmitted mainly through human contact. Thus, the study revealed that at the beginning there was limited understanding of the nature of the pandemic by the public as well as some medical experts. Majority of the public viewed COVID-19 from a "Them and Us" perspective. The general feeling among the public was that only outside travellers were contracting the disease. Some also believed Africans were immune to the virus. The public attitude towards the pandemic pointed to little or lack of communication awareness. The study further revealed that the government made a lot of wrongful assumptions, such as if because COVID-19 was declared a major threat around the world, the local people would automatically understand the threat, which was not the case in Namibia. The government should have engaged the public in all layers of the pandemic response.

Findings further show that there were inadequate preparations on the part of the state to counter crises of COVID-19 magnitude, especially with regards to communication strategy during and after a pandemic such as COVID-19, medium and long-term planning would be required by the government to rebalance and re-energize the country.

It can also be seen that there was insufficient engagement with stakeholders such as NGOs, CBOs, and various government institution because of the absence of a well-developed collaborations mechanism. Based on identified challenges regarding communication of COVID-19 as a national security threat to Namibia, it can be concluded that the second research question formulated in chapter 1, has been reasonably answered.

5.2.3 Research Question 3

What remedial measures are necessary to improve communication of COVID-19 as a national security threat?

This question was formulated to guide the researcher to identify workable solutions to communication with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic and its national security threats. The study revealed that public trust is as an important resource for mobilizing public cooperation, maintaining the behaviours required for pandemic management and achieving effective communication during a pandemic.

Findings show several propositions from the point of view of study participants and consistent with existing literature. Vaughan & Tinker, (2009), state that "even the best strategies, however, can be rendered ineffective by insufficient health risk communications or a failure to integrate a communication perspective and community engagement at all stages of planning, response, and recovery". In support of this view, study participants highlighted government's lack of community engagement contributed to the ineffectiveness of COVID-19 communication as a national security in Namibia.

While the discussions indicated a good understanding of the problem being investigated, most of the solutions proffered by respondents were too general. For example, it was proposed that the government should deploy well-trained health personnel to conduct public awareness campaigns and spread clear and consistent messages about COVID-19 and its impact on national security as one of the remedies. However, this suggestion is contradicted by McGuire et al., (2020), who argue that community engagement has long been an important part of public health, particularly when it comes to planning for pandemics. Their view prioritizes community engagement as opposed to health personnel as advocated by the participants. Community engagement appears to be potentially valuable across a range of functions, from setting achievable goals for health-related initiatives to increasing public awareness and understanding of complex issues and eliciting public concerns and priorities.

As found in the literature, Reynolds et al., (2007), point out that the tragic aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, in the United States of America, it was made evident that there were some critical challenges in the communication between government and other communities. In the context of Namibia, the different ethnic cultures, rural and urban cultures call for different approaches by the government in communicating the pandemic. The different cultural settings in the country need to be recognized for effective communication to take place when delivering public health messages through mass communication channels. The study found out that government communication strategies during health emergency, such as COVID-19, should acknowledge and be sensitive to cultural norms, spiritual and religious norms in the country.

Finally, the study participants highlighted that the Namibian government should prioritize transparency as it lacked in its communication, particularly in cases of health emergencies such as COVID-19. Transparency in the information presented and the decision-making process, increases community trust in government and health institutions. Based on these findings, it is reasonable to conclude that the research question as posed resulted in discussions and data analysis aimed at developing an effective communication strategy and is thus answered.

5.3 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the analysis of interview results and evaluation of research questions, the researcher proposes the following recommendations:

- Strengthening of communication strategies to foster mutual trust and good working relationships with relevant authorities to combat any health or security threats caused by a pandemic. Therefore, the use of the news media and other non-government information channels should be open, transparent, and timely in information dissemination. This also implies that community meetings/engagements.
- Inclusive communication- specifically tailed towards the needs of diverse groups such as the youth, different languages, and who are differently abled such as hearing, speech, mobility, and vision impairment. This also entails that the government should adopt a participatory approach in matters involving the public in order to increase public trust, provide timely and comprehensive information.

- Strengthen international partnerships with the view of learning international good practices to enhance local capacity and efforts. This equally entails identifying weakness and gaps in national emergency management and communication.
- Adopt a multi-sectoral approach in communicating national emergencies or outbreaks of pandemics of international proportions and their existential threats or security implications for the country.
- Opening of conversation regarded necessary changes and adaptions to cope with national emergencies such as pandemic outbreaks should be considered critical to managing the outbreak. In this regard, emphasis should be placed on, for example, new beneficial health habits and attitudes.
- Employing the services of trusted messengers, especially experts, who share the values of and understand the needs of diverse audience. For example, it was necessary to bringing biomedical scientists and health professionals during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- The Namibian government should be proactive in providing timeous sufficient knowledge to the public; so that the public is aware and prepared in their role in combating any threats posed by a pandemic. The reason for this recommendation is because there was a high rate of disrespect of COVID- 19 regulations and lack of emphasis on national security implications of the pandemic.
- Provision of strong leadership in times of national crisis is critical to overcoming any emergency. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that resilient leadership in healthcare, business, government, and wider society be encouraged. This also entails the role of the government unifying and motivating the public during crises.

5.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

This chapter summarized the previous chapter's main findings and then developed a discussion about communication and national security threats during a pandemic such as COVID-19, concluding with recommendations for future pandemics in Namibia. Among lessons learnt from this study is that health contingency plans must be made in anticipation of pandemic outbreaks rather wait until outbreak occurs otherwise after-thought ameliorative measures cannot work.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

University of Namibia, Private Bag 13301, Windhoek, Namibia
340 Mandume Ndemufayo Avenue, Pioneerspark
☎ +264 61 206 3111; URL.: http//www.unam.edu.na

UNAM
UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

11 May 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH

Research is an integral part of postgraduate studies at the University of Namibia (UNAM). It is carried out in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Postgraduate degrees. Against this background, I write to kindly request your permission to allow **Pretunilla Kaunapawa Shikwambi** (Student number: 201404621) who is completing his/her Master of Security Studies (MASSS) degree at the School of Military Science, UNAM, to carry out studies in your facility.

The titled of the study is, ***The Challenges of Communicating Global Pandemics as National Security Issue: a Case Study of Covid-19 in Namibia.*** The student will use the methods of questionnaire and interview to collect data for the study. The data collected will be used specifically for academic purposes and will not be passed on to a third party in accordance with research ethics and UNAM's confidentiality policy.

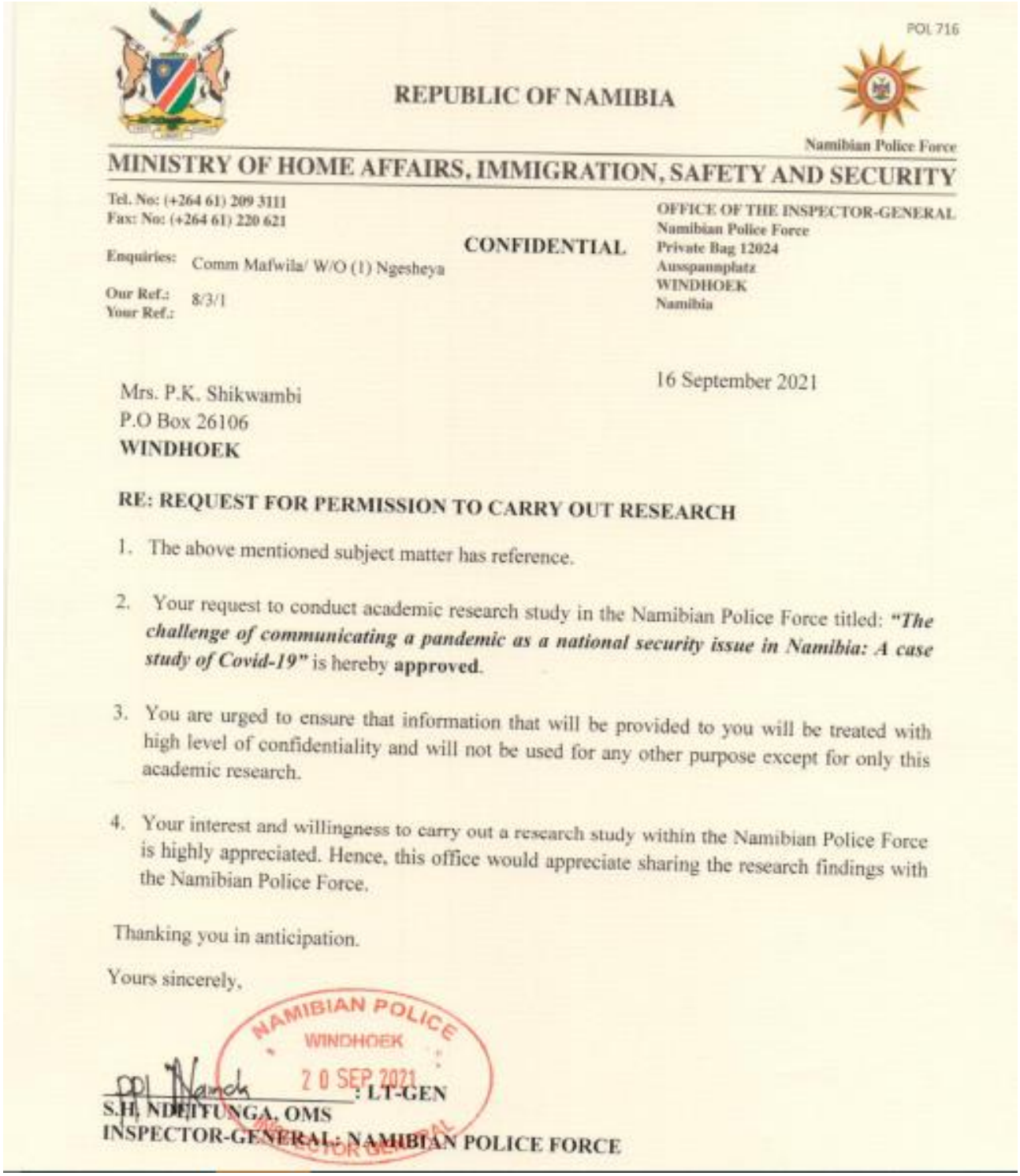
It would be highly appreciated if your good office would facilitate the student's study by granting her/him permission to carry out his/her study in your organisation. I thank you for your continued support and kind consideration of our request.

Yours Sincerely

.

Dr. Iroanya Richard Obinna
Acting Associate Dean
School of Military Science
University of Namibia, Windhoek

APPENDIX B



POL 716

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

Namibian Police Force

MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS, IMMIGRATION, SAFETY AND SECURITY

Tel. No: (+264 61) 209 3111
Fax No: (+264 61) 220 621

CONFIDENTIAL

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR-GENERAL
Namibian Police Force
Private Bag 12024
Ausspannplatz
WINDHOEK
Namibia

Enquiries: Comm Mafwila/ W/O (1) Ngesheya

Our Ref.: 8/3/1
Your Ref.:

16 September 2021

Mrs. P.K. Shikwambi
P.O Box 26106
WINDHOEK

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH

1. The above mentioned subject matter has reference.

2. Your request to conduct academic research study in the Namibian Police Force titled: ***"The challenge of communicating a pandemic as a national security issue in Namibia: A case study of Covid-19"*** is hereby **approved**.

3. You are urged to ensure that information that will be provided to you will be treated with high level of confidentiality and will not be used for any other purpose except for only this academic research.

4. Your interest and willingness to carry out a research study within the Namibian Police Force is highly appreciated. Hence, this office would appreciate sharing the research findings with the Namibian Police Force.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

NAMIBIAN POLICE
WINDHOEK
20 SEP 2021
INSPECTOR-GENERAL

: LT-GEN
S.H. NDEITUNGA, OMS
INSPECTOR-GENERAL: NAMIBIAN POLICE FORCE

APPENDIX C

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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28 October 2022

CONFIRMATION OF EDITING -MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY AND STRATEGIC STUDIES THESIS: PRETUNILLA K. SHIKWAMBI (201404621)

The above subject matter bears reference:

I write to attest that I have reviewed and edited Shikwambi PK's thesis titled: **The Challenges of Communicating Global Pandemics as National Security Issue: A Case Study of COVID-19 in Namibia**. The editing was done to the best of my ability and involved language and content relevance checks and was subjected to Grammarly as well. The editing guarantees the quality of English language in the thesis. If any further information is required, please feel free to contact me.

Yours Sincerely

Dr PDzimiri-PhD-University of Pretoria
Senior Lecturer-Department of Arts and Social Sciences
(Development Studies, Politics and International Relations Unit)
Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education
TeL: +27 15 962 8126

APPENDIX D

FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE, ENGINEERING & NATURAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF MILITARY SCIENCE

DEPARTMENT OF SECURITY AND STRATEGIC STUDIES

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE:

INSTITUTIONS: MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES/ MINISTRY OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY/MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS/MINISTRY OF JUSTICE/NAMIBIAN POLICE FORCE / MEDIA HOUSES

RESEARCHER: PRETUNILLA KAUNAPAWA SHIKWAMBI

COURSE: MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY AND STRATEGIC STUDIES

ANNEXURE 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE

DEAR RESPONDENT

Thank you for participating in this study. My name is Pretunilla Kaunapawa Shikwambi, a Master of Arts in Security and Strategic Studies student at the University of Namibia. I am conducting a research titled: **"*The challenges of communicating a pandemic as a national security issue in Namibia: A case study of COVID-19".***

In lieu of the above, you are kindly requested to participate in this study by answering the questions below to assist me in addressing the subject matter.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Please tick in the appropriate box ✓

1. What is your Gender?

Male	
Female	

2. What is your current position?

SECTION B. OPEN – ENDED QUESTIONS

My Research questions:

1. Do you think that COVID-19 poses any security risks to Namibia?

If yes, kindly explain

_____

_____

_____

_____

If No, kindly provide reasons

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Do you think that the government is communicating COVID-19as a national security threat?

If yes, kindly explain.

_____

_____

_____

_____

If No, kindly provide your reasons.

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Do you think that Namibians understand COVID-19as a national security threat?

If yes, kindly explain.

_____

_____

_____

_____

If No, kindly provide your reasons.

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. What in your view are the challenges of communicating COVID-19 as national security threat to Namibia?

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. What remedial measures you think are necessary to improve communication of COVID-19 as a national security threat?

_____

_____

_____

_____

END.