# PROCESSES OF GROUP COMMUNICATION FOR ORGANISATIONAL COHESION: A STUDY OF SELECTED NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN KENYA

## BY

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF INFORMATION SCIENCES, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLISHING, JOURNALISM AND COMMUNCATION STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES

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# DECLARATION

**Declaration by Candidate**

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# DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family and especially my father who continuously encouraged me and saw me through every step. Thank you all for your support.

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# ABSTRACT

Comprehending processes of group communication significantly aids in promotion of group cohesion. This study aimed at investigating how members within organizations not only value differences but also engage with those differences through understanding processes of group communication and how comprehending these processes can enhance group's cohesion therefore achieving organizational objective. There are minimal empirical studies that have looked at the processes of group communication in organizations in Kenya. The purpose of this study was therefore to comprehend the processes of group communication for organizational cohesion through the following research questions: What group communication processes are commonly reported in organizations? How do group communication processes influence cohesion in organizations? What are the perceptions on the influence of group communication processes on organizational cohesion? The study was formulated and based on Gile's Communication Accommodation Theory of group communication. The study adopted the qualitative case study research design, with a purposive sample of 20 participants based on experience, knowledge and availability, selected from two national organizations in Kenya and data was generated through in-depth interviews. The data was transcribed and analyzed thematically and reported in line with the research questions. The findings were discussed with reference to the literature reviewed. The main findings of the study were that groups are formed based on the roles of members in the organization. The members further form their own social groups purely based on personal interests and needs. Cohesion is then influenced either negatively or positively by these factors through the complexities of group communication since multiple channels of communication are used. These channels can bring about miscommunication, distorted or contradicting messages. However, use of multiple communication channels also has its advantages since all members receive the information in time and enables instant feedback. The study further revealed that organizations need to be more consistent with group activities such as team building in order to help harness group communication attitudes and characteristics for organizational cohesion. The study thus concluded that group communication is a complex subject; therefore, many stakeholders in organizations are still learning to comprehend the processes especially with no specific structured guidelines on social group formations and their operations within the organizations in relation to organizational cohesion. The study therefore recommends that organizations should utilize services of communication practitioners and organizational stakeholders to come up with permanent mechanisms to be implemented on harnessing group communication as well as positive use of grapevine by administration to help curb possible unrest and enhance organizational cohesion. This study has yielded significant findings to organizations on processes of group communication and also added to the literature on group communication in particular and the discipline of organizational communication in general.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| CAT | - | Communication Accommodation Theory |
| NCI | - | National Cohesion and Integration |
| NCIC | - | National Cohesion and Integration Commission |
| OCS | - | Organizational Cohesion Scale |
| UNESCO | - | United Nations Education Science and Cultural Organization |

# OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The following key terms are repeatedly used in this Proposal and are operationalized as follows:

**Cohesion –** Operationalized here to mean collective awareness of, belief in and demonstration of unity and identity in implementing organizational objectives, functions, and structures.

**Communication –** A process through which persons interact and share verbal and/or non -verbal messages.

**Group Communication –** This involves communication between identifiable groups of three people or more people. In this study, examples of groups include members of the management, same level in organizational hierarchy, same department, same church, same ethnic community, same neighborhood; same university; among others.

**Group Processes –** Encompasses various complex interrelationships (group formation, structure and process and function) that influence group thoughts, decisions and behaviors; that occur within group (intragroup processes) or between groups (intergroup processes) with potential influence on organizational cohesion.

**Organization –** An institution that is legally registered and recognized nationally, has clearly stipulated objectives and functions, with a discernible administrative structure and documented regulations

**CHAPTER ONE**

**BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

**1.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I present the overall introduction to the study. I begin with the context in which I explain both the academic and social contexts. It is followed by the statement of the problem where I present the issues that prompted me to do a study on Group Communication. Thereafter, I provide my research questions, scope and finally rationale for the study under which the justification and significance of the study are also discussed. The chapter ends with a brief summary of the chapter.

**1.2 Context of the Study**

On the context of the study, I look at both the academic and the social contexts of the study.

**1.2.1 Academic Context**

This study investigated the processes of group communication for organizational cohesion at two governmental agencies in Kenya. Group communication refers to, "the interaction of a small group of people to achieve an interdependent goal. (Galanes, Brilhardt, & Adams, 2000). Pearson et al (2003) also note that communication is an essential process within a small group. They further explain that, "communication creates a group, shapes each group in unique ways and maintains a group. As with other forms of human communication, small-group communication involves sending verbal and non-verbal signals that are perceived, interpretated and responded to by other people. Group members pay attention to each other and coordinate their behavior in order to accomplish the group's assignment. Perfect understanding between the person sending the signal and those receiving the signal is

never possible; in a group, members strive to have enough understanding to enable the group's purpose to be achieved."

When analyzing communication, philosophers consider its necessity in the situation, its localization, and the activity through which the communication occurs. These factors influence the intensity of the communication, and the peculiarities of emotional responses between the participants as well as the respective degrees of satisfaction regarding the communication. From a philosophical perspective, the primary aim of communication is to promote one's self or to develop a sense of identity ensuring satisfaction through the communication as well. Based on this model, the complexities of communication become obvious. If the majority group uses communication to promote the political or sociological agendas of that group, the outcome may result in conflict for the minority groups, particularly if they are approaching the communicative process as a means to develop self-identity (Shakirova & Farida, 2002).

Within complex communication environments, there are organizations composed of various groups. Such groups are characterized by peer relationships, inclined to small groups rather than one-on-one organizational experiences. Most individuals in organizations spend considerable time in groups and most of them have memberships in multiple groups. Each group has its norms which are the unwritten behavior rules, ways of doing things that groups develop over time more so through tacit rather than explicit agreement. Norms reflect what the group deems desirable and can be said to be cultural beliefs about effectiveness or appropriateness. These norms also inform the group's communication behaviors as they contribute to shared group realities and culture. Groups have general norms that apply to all members and role-specific norms that apply to individual members (Shockley-Zalabak, 2014).

Individuals assume different roles in groups as well as bring to the group predispositions for a variety of communication behaviors. These predispositions and communication roles will interact with those of other members of the group to create shared realities of the group (Shockley-Zalabak, 2014).

Individuals bring their previous experiences and backgrounds to group participation. As the workforce and markets become increasingly diverse and global, an important component of persons' personal communication competency is the ability to work effectively in groups with those who have different backgrounds from their own (Shockley-Zalabak, 2014). As Tylor Cox Jr. (1993) suggested, "It is important to acknowledge that all members of organizations, not just members of minority groups, have salient group identities. To the extent that gender affects organizational experience, it affects both men and women. To the extent that racial-ethnic identity has effects, it affects whites and non-whites. If accountants are disdained in favor of engineers, both engineers and accountants are affected. Appreciation of this simple fact, that we all have group identities which affect our own behavior and how others treat us, is a vital step toward building personal competence for working in diverse groups."

Most individuals understand diverse groups are affected by different communication roles and approaches of members. The key notion is not that differences exist but how the group engages with these differences as it works on both task and relationship issues. Shockley-Zalabak (2014) further adds that research continually supports the importance of effective communication for groups' productivity however the question of, what is effective communication within diverse groups, continues to arise with no definite answer. The competencies of members to work together to not only value differences but also use differences to enhance the group's productivity therefore

influences my study of comprehending the processes in group communication for overall organizational cohesion.

### 1.2.2 Social Context

"Small groups permeate nearly all facets of our lives. Our families, our jobs, our courses and our friends are all invigorated and driven by small groups of people." (Pearson et al, 2003). They further add that "small groups are the basic building blocks of our society." Membership in small groups is both important and common as affirmed by Vice (2001) who states that research has consistently documented teamwork as one of the most important communication skills for personal and professional success.

Groups within organizations contain clearly defined characteristics while others are amorphous therefore understanding of small-group interaction is much more complex than a two-person interaction. The description of the world by McLuhan (2003) as a global village because of the electronic technology and the instantaneous flow of information from every quarter to every corner of the globe, further complicate group communication. Socialization is on the rise hence formation of more groups if simply divided; socially, economically and culturally because of diversified experiences, beliefs and personalities.

Kenya as a multi-ethnic nation is often faced with various conflicts because of various differences in terms of beliefs, experiences and backgrounds which lead to formation of groups within the organization. These groups and their differences in opinions manifest in organizations when opportunities of leadership arise in the work place. As a country that has experienced post-election violence on sub-sequent elections, I deem it necessary to look at the smaller systems currently in place (organizations) which are

building blocks to the larger institution, the country. The emphasis on national unity founded in the national values Article 10 of the constitution demands that NCIC continues furthering the ideals espoused in the National Accord and Reconciliation Agreement of 2008. The NCI Act advances strategies promoting meaningful relationships between Kenyans. NCIC through the Uwiano Platform, the Road to Cohesion Initiative and the Kenya Kwanza Campaign, just to mention a few, demonstrates that Kenyans value cohesiveness and have capacity to accommodate diverse opinions as well as find resonance in handling differences by use of non-violent means. NCIC is alive to the dynamics that have entrenched negative ethnic practices, including nepotism, patronage, impunity and discrimination are rife. In view of this, the Commission finds thematic relevance in strategies that aim at policy, attitude and practice change towards an integrated and cohesive Kenyan society.

From the concept of a global village resulting from globalization, to the description of the Kenyan context, all these are aspects to be put into consideration during group communication. Individuals in organizations experience group processes in communication derived from the diversity in cultural and social inclinations. Diversity has moreover become a major social concern, linked to the growing variety of social codes within and between societies. The emergence on the political stage of local communities, indigenous peoples, deprived or vulnerable groups and those excluded on grounds of ethnic origin, social affiliation, age or gender, has led to the discovery, within societies, of new forms of diversity (UNESCO, 2009). These contexts therefore form a background on which I discuss the statement of the problem in the subsequent section.

**1.3 Statement of the Problem**

In the statement of the problem, I looked into the academic, social and the contextual problems. There exist many groups, either social or task-related within organizations. However, the extent to which groups engage with differences and diversity through comprehending the processes of group communication for organizational cohesion was still a question that needed to be answered. There is existing literature on the effects of group communication and organizational performance however literature on the processes of group communication for organizational cohesion is still a bit of a challenge. Therefore, this study sought to explore and develop literature on what complexities of group communication are commonly reported and how the processes of group communication can be comprehended and the knowledge used to come up with strategies to enhance organizational cohesion.

As mentioned earlier on the analysis of communication, philosophers also consider its necessity in the situation, its localization, and the activity through which the communication occurs. These factors influence the intensity of the communication and focus particularly on the peculiarities of emotional responses between the participants as well as the respective degrees of satisfaction regarding the communication (Shakirova & Farida, 2002).

Socially, conflicts within groups manifest in organizations at different levels because of the varied processes of group communication including group development, decision making, conflict and negotiation, difference and diversity, technology and innovation, all of which are related to our underlying assumptions about communication and our understanding of human interaction thereby affecting organizational cohesion. Group communication is also becoming more complex because of the increase in globalization, rapidly diversified employee and customer

bases, changing technology, an increasing awareness of organizational relationships to society in general and many other factors contribute to new relationships between organizations and employees and a growing acknowledgement of the complexity of all organizational life as explained in Shockley-Zalabak's (2014). The complexities of these processes further complicate the communication of groups. However, according to UNESCO (2009) these differences embody a positive potential, for it is through them that we complement one another in devising novel solutions for living together in our social and natural settings.

Institutions in Kenya, often accommodate persons from diverse groups and are sometimes always faced with challenges of these groups coexisting cohesively within the environs of the institution. Differences especially occur when questions of leadership come up of staff and even from the surrounding community and some of these differences are usually expressed through demonstrations, strikes and other forms. When such situations occur, they interfere with normal operations within the institution and even affect the daily operations of the surrounding community. A national organization stands out as a better case study considering the diversity of groups as this represents a true picture of the country and globe in terms of communication processes. These scenarios therefore prompt this study, to broadly investigate the processes of group communication for organizational cohesion through the subsequent research questions, as advised by Savin-Biden & Major (2013), Wolcott (2009) and Mugenda & Mugenda (2008), among others.

## 1.4 Research Questions

1. What group communication processes are commonly reported in organizations?

2. How do these group communication processes influence cohesion in organizations?

3. What are the perceptions on the influence of group communication processes on organizational cohesion?

## 1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope here implies the extent to which the researcher will explore the research area in this paper and the specified parameters within which the research operates. I explain Scope in three levels respectively; in terms of content, the geographical scope and in terms of research methodology (Creswell, 2009) since it is suitable to my qualitative study.

### 1.5.1 Content Scope

In the first question, 'what group communication processes are commonly reported in organizations?' I sought to investigate what kind of groups exist in organizations, the reasons for membership within one or several groups, the existence of more or less fixed (permanent) groups and temporary ones and the various characteristics and functions of various groups.

In the second research question, 'how do these group communication processes influence cohesion in an organisation?' My intention was to establish how intra-group communication promotes inter - group coexistence within the organisation. This I intended to find out by looking into some of the communication channels, media and patterns that the groups use be it among each other or with other groups and implications of these on organisational cohesion. I explored existing or implicitly, miscommunication or misunderstanding between the groups and, how such issues are handled within the organisation. I explored whether the organisations have any guidelines on groupings and group membership – documented or not? Do the organisations identify healthy and unhealthy communication within or between

groups – how? Are there any institutionally recognised intra or inter -group communication channels, media or patterns, on what criteria? What happens to illegal or potentially "damaging groups? It was of importance to explore issues of allegiance under this question; whether the allegiance was to the group or organisation. How do the organisations handle conflicting group communication in terms of allegiance to the groups and institutions? What mechanisms do the organisations put in place to ensure group communication processes enhance organisational cohesion (if any)?

Finally, on, 'What are the perceptions on the influence of group communication processes on organisational cohesion?'I focused on understanding the different views and opinions of the different (identifiable) groups in the organisations on the channels, patterns, and media used in the organisations by finding out whether they think these are effective in promoting organisational cohesion, what their suggestions were on improving the communication. I also looked into some of the existent activities that the groups participate in within the organisations and whether they are of any benefit in terms of promoting cohesion and if there are none, what do the groups think about starting up such activities.

## 1.5.2 Geographical scope

The study was conducted in two institutions in Nairobi County. I chose these sites because I believe that they provided me with the diversified groups that enabled me get rich information on the processes of group communication. This is because the organizations seek to represent the face of Kenya through the staff and subordinates as well. The organizations also have various departments that have to work together to ensure the success of the organizations including collaborators from other organizations that have related mandates. The organisations were also easily

accessible therefore allowing the researcher to conduct the research more conveniently since it gave room for multiple visits.

However, the main limitation in terms of context was that, the study only covered two organizations. Different organizations have different laid out structures and challenges hence it would have been informative to cover more organizations to give the study different perspectives. The study is still worthwhile since there was diversity in the representation of co-researchers therefore there was production of rich information and multiplicity in the voices hence perspectives.

### 1.5.3 Methodological Scope

My study used the qualitative design through a multiple case study method. This I believed using instruments such as in-depth interviews yielded worthwhile information. This is because qualitative investigations provided detailed views of both staff and subordinates in their own words, analysis of multiple perspectives and specific organisational contexts of different groups on what group communication processes imply on the organisational cohesion. In addition, qualitative inquiry offered me the opportunity to involve staff and subordinates as co-researchers, a data collection procedure that enhanced the credibility of participants' independent views. Further details of methodological scope are discussed exhaustively in Chapter Three.

As good as qualitative approach may be for this study, I had a high limitation of time because I sought information from participants in their natural settings without interfering with their daily routines. This study however is still worthwhile as it gave in-depth information on the processes of group communication for organisational cohesion.

**1.6 Rationale for the study**

The rationale for the study looked into, to whom the information this study will be important to and reasons for doing this study which are looked into in the following subsequent sections.

**1.7 Justification**

Proper comprehension of processes of group communication proves essential in promoting and enhancing group cohesiveness. Individuals with diversity become prone to differences in group communication stemming from differences in values, traditions, and thinking patterns. (Sarnovar, Porter, and Stefani, 1998).

True to the above statement, group communication processes are aimed at identifying ways through which Kenya's rich diversity could be turned to strength and opportunities facilitating better inter-group understanding which help reduce tension and increase trust and better understanding across the different groups. Communication helps in generating ideas that will add value to the inter-group relations thereby fostering cohesion hence the importance of doing this study.

Morrison (2008) concluded in his examination of negative relationships in the workplace and the adverse effects they played on workgroup cohesion that, employees who reported at least one negative relationship in the workplace reported lower levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment; were involved with less cohesive workgroups and reported a greater likelihood of leaving their jobs. Morrison's research is of importance because it encourages organisations to promote cohesive workgroups and positive relationships among employees hence in the long run contributing to organisational cohesion. This conclusion also serves as a justification for this study as understanding the processes of group communication

will greatly aid in promoting positive relationships within the organisation and eventually building strong organisational cohesion.

## 1.8 Significance

This study, I believe using the qualitative approach and involving staff and subordinate members of the case as co-researchers, will be of great insight on group communication processes and how they can be comprehended for organisational cohesion. This is because, comprehending what group communication processes are, can help reveal some of the strategies that can be used to enhance and promote organisational cohesion hence achieving organisational objective. With this understanding, Institutions will conceptualize: what group communication processes are, how they influence cohesion in an organisation and finally how to better harness group communication processes to enhance cohesion. Especially for the chosen organisations since the results of this study will be a reflection of the organisations. This information can aid the policy makers in designing of programs and implementation of the same programs in consideration of group processes and how to deal with the same towards ensuring a cohesive environment in organisations. Organisations such as the NCIC and UNESCO can also use this study to improve their strategies on promoting peaceful co-existence and cohesion in the country as it is in relation with their objectives. This study has also provided literature that would be useful in informing further research on other areas of group communication.

## 1.9 Summary

I started by looking into the background of the study where I highlighted generally on the academic and social contexts of group communication that inform this study both globally and nationally. I then followed by stating my problem where I state that the complexities of group communication processes which continue to affect

organisational cohesion without being exhaustively being looked into hence, I back it up with research questions that I used covering specific geographical, methodological and content scope however with various expected limitations. I then conclude the chapter by stating of what importance is and what contribution it would make in the world of research and to various diversified organisations. In Chapter Two, relevant literature to group communication in line with the questions posed shall be reviewed.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review relevant related literature on group communication and more specifically on inter-group communication processes as key concepts are also defined that are used in this study. This chapter provides an insight into situating the current study within the existing body of knowledge in the field of Communication Studies, particularly on Group communication and Inter-group communication. This chapter seeks to discuss group communication processes for organisational cohesion. In this Chapter, I also identify the gap in previous related research that I seek to contribute to through the study and finally summarise the chapter.

## 2.2 Communication

Communication is a widely researched concept and various scholars have different definitions though there are common terms used. It is somewhat a complex and a dynamic process. Robbins (2011) sees communication as the transfer of information from a sender to receiver with the information being understood by the receiver. This definition puts in mind the aspect of the receiver comprehending the information being transferred. While Adler & Elmhorst (1996) asserted that "communication is the exchange of information and the transmission of meaning and is the very essence of a social system or an organization."

This study will use the definition of Communication as a process of giving, receiving or exchanging ideas, information, signals or messages through appropriate media, enabling individuals or groups to persuade, to seek information, to give information or to express emotions. It is also of importance to adopt to While Adler & Elmhorst's (1996) definition since while looking into the processes of group communication for

organisational cohesion, we should consider that communication is the very essence of a social system. Therefore, without communication, there is no existence of any system including organisations; conflicts and wars arise.

## 2.2.1 Group Communication

This involves communication among more than two people: examples include family members, classmates, and passengers in a commuter bus or railway coach. It may also take place between groups such as between elders and the representatives of youths in a locality (Shonubi, &Akin taro, 2016).

Benne and Sheats (1948) developed three important classifications of group communication roles; group task roles, group maintenance roles, and self-centered roles. Task roles help groups accomplish goals whereas maintenance roles promote social support among group members. Self-centered roles support individual goals and may or may not be compatible with overall group goals and relationships. When members perform *group task roles*; they make suggestions, contribute new ideas, ask for facts and provide information important for the group to make decisions. They may offer opinions or seek opinions as well as clarify information used to perform tasks or contribute to group direction. Members also perform task roles when they summarize and evaluate ideas.

*Group maintenance roles* provide support to the group, reconcile differences or suggest areas of agreement, relieve tensions and find positions that most group members can support.

*Self-centered roles* focus more on individual desires than on group process and often are seen in someone blocking ideas, dominating the conversation, clowning around to avoid responsibility or engaging in other generally negative behaviors. Generally,

group task and maintenance roles are productive for group interaction whereas self-centered roles are destructive and contribute to in-effectiveness. Most individuals engage in these roles at one point or the other (Shockley-Zalabak, 2014).

All these definitions by different scholars of this concept are more than relevant to this study, however, I think that the definition that best resonates with this study is that by Judy C. Pearson et al (2003). They say that small-group communication "is the interaction of a small group of people to achieve an interdependent goal" which is a definition that they borrow from Galanese et al (2000). This definition is further broken down by Judy C. Pearson et.al who state that; Groups must be small enough that members are mutually aware that the group of people is a collective entity and that groups typically contain between 3 and 9 people but may be larger if members perceive the group as an entity. The substance that creates and holds the group together is the interaction between members. Group members are interdependent – they cannot achieve their goals without the help of other group members.

The above broken-down definition implies that communication is the essential process within a small-group. Group members pay attention to each other and coordinate their behavior in order to accomplish the group's goal through sending verbal and non-verbal signals that are perceived, interpreted and responded to by other people. Persons belong to different groups therefore leading to formation of different types of groups of which Pearson et al. (2003) identify four ways to categorise groups:

*Task oriented groups/secondary groups* which are formed for the purpose of completing tasks such as solving a problem or making a decision.

*Relationship-oriented groups/primary groups* which are usually long-term and exist to meet our needs for inclusion and affection.

*Assigned groups* which evolve out of a hierarchy where individuals are appointed as members of the group.

*Emergence groups* which are results of environmental conditions leading to the formation of a cohesive group of individuals.

However, the above classification risks oversimplification of a complex process because groups being comprised of people and sustained through communication can go through several metamorphoses. Hence members classified in one group can also have characteristics belonging to another group.

Harris and Sherblom in the book, *Small Group and Team Communication*, talk about the essence of group communication to achieve the best out of the teams within an organization. The authors state that to make the intended goals within the group, it is essential to understand the phases in which groups go through and the communication patterns in the various phases. In chapter four, the authors give four phases of groups, namely; *forming, storming, norming, and performing*.

The communication pattern during **forming**; the first phase, includes diversity and cohesion since it is during this stage that people strive to know each other. Communication at this stage becomes tentative where individuals avoid or ignore conflicts in an effort to understand each member's purpose for being within the group.

In the second phase, **storming**; communication changes to being *open*. With conflicts and disagreements arising, members engage in honest communication in an effort to foster cohesion within the group.

In the last two stages, ***norming and performing***; the group tends to follow a stipulated channel of communication characterised by the protocol. At this stage, people put aside diversity and embrace the goal of the group. Although, to recognise that groups are not static entities is equally important since understanding general characteristics of different types of groups is valuable. The same way that our personal relationships can go through several turning points, our group memberships are also constantly in flux.

## 2.2.2 Group Communication Processes

A group contains individuals of diverse characteristics. One way to observe the diversity in a group is through the communication pattern expressed. Communication processes in a group happen by observing who talks, for how long, the attention accorded to one individual, the style of communication used, the participation trend of the people, and even how to handle the silent individuals in a group. John and Turman (2008) state that the communication processes in a group depend on the context. While talking about group communication pitfalls, the authors commented on the need to understand which individual communicates effectively in a given context. Influence plays a major role in achieving group communication. By understanding that some members may speak little but stir greatinfluence unlike others who speak lengthily, the group finds it easier to allocate various communication roles to respective individuals. It involves figuring out which members are high on influence and which ones gather minimal influence when they speak.

Through group communication processes, it is easy to establish the productivity of people while in groups. From a simple exploration like measuring the force used by one person when pulling a rope to comparing it with when people join hands and through good communication, they use united force to pull the rope, one can

understand the philosophy of group processes as noted by several researchers. From this philosophy (the Ringlemann effect), though there are advantages and disadvantages of group processes, people have a social influence on each other, a concept that may go unnoticed by the group members. Individuals in a group, as the study suggests, can be significantly influenced by forces that go beyond awareness of the individuals within the groups. The main goal of group processes, therefore, is to identify social influences, then formulate techniques or procedures to counteract the negative aspects of social influence while optimising the positive aspects.

All the above-mentioned factors are related to our underlying assumptions about communication and our understanding of human interaction. Comprehending group processes helps improve group work hence organisational cohesion in long term.

*The key processes that need to be looked into, to aid in the understanding of group interaction include:*

**Group development:** Group development and decision-making focuses on how groups come together through socialisation, their development and how roles are developed. This process also looks into some of the decision-making gaps that groups can fall into.

All groups pass through phases in which their members' interaction dominates by certain topics and issues. From the research of Levi (2015), groups tack back and forth over relational and task issues. For example, a group may exert such an enormous effort to solve a task that frustration builds up between various members. The group may then almost abandon the task and concentrate instead on repairing the relationships among the group members. This means that what a group is supposed to

do and talk about may be significantly influenced by the phase of development that the group is going through.

**Decision Making:** When groups of people undertake a task together, decisions that they make result in intensive consultation rather than from the decision-making prowess of the individuals. Group processes, therefore, play a critical role in the creativity and quality of their decisions. One of the processes in decision making at this level is power that can go beyond position on an organisational chart. The 'power' here can comprise of personal attributes such as dominance, charisma, or attractiveness. Through the group interactions, it is possible to note people who influence the group and who can inform certain decision, which may not necessarily be those in positions of power. When groups are asked to choose a leader to facilitate a conversation, almost half the time people chose a leader based not on experience but on factors like dominance and charisma, those groups make worse decisions than groups with no leader at all.

**Conflict and negotiation:** Conflict arises in organisations or in groups when people have different ideologies and interests to serve. The sole issue in negotiation technique in such a situation is conformity to the group's standards, norms, and guidance through the governing principle. Whenever a group comes together, although they have a common goal, they might have different ideas on how to achieve the goal. When the differences are not solved, they might result in conflicts. Such calls for negotiations to have members serve the same interests. On conflict, difference and diversity; this looks into how groups handle disputes and how they negotiate with others and among themselves when things get difficult. It also focuses on why difference and diversity are so important for group communication and why it is critical to understand the concept of identity during such communication. Another

key issue under this process is communication and gender which is a significant aspect of difference and diversity for groups to understand.

**Deviance:** There are many forms of deviance. It is typical to understand deviance as something bad, such as when someone drops out of a group, rebels against a group, or sabotages a group. While such forms of deviance are not always bad, other forms of deviance, such as innovation, are very likely to be good; that is, innovative deviance can help a group solve problems or adapt to new situations. A "devil's advocate" in a group can prevent a group from making an unwise, ill-thought-out decision. Deviance is a way that group members show their independence or anti-conformity.

Deviant behavior and the deviants themselves are likely to be negatively judged by group members. Deviants, however, can be judged positively. Groups tolerate deviants who have group-centered motives. Members who deviate only after careful conformity to group norms during the early formation of the group are judged positively. Group members who have high status also have more latitude to deviate.

**Social integration and influence**: Social integration refers to how members fit together and are accepted in the group. Norms, roles, and status are group processes that promote social inclusion by influencing how members behave. These processes set out members' places within the group. They lend order and familiarity to group processes, helping to make individual members' behaviors predictable and comfortable for all. Norms, roles, and status help groups to avoid excessive conflict and unpredictability, which can, in turn, lead to chaos and the disintegration of the group. Groups cannot function effectively without a relatively high level of social integration of members. Social integration helps to build unanimity about the purposes and goals of the group, helping the group move forward in an orderly and

efficient manner to accomplish work and achieve its goals. With increasing technology, an increasingly prevalent process in group communication is group communication and technology. This aspect looks into how groups use technology to communicate and their ability to properly use various technological platforms to interact.

### 2.2.3  Organisational Cohesion

Having looked at the concept of an organisation above, I therefore look into the concept of organisational cohesion:

Cohesion is an important group process that may lead to the formation and maintenance of groups (Lewin, 1935). There are a variety of situations in which cohesion can manifest (e.g., competitive sport settings, workplace environments, and overarching societal structures (Carron, Widmeyer, & Brawley, 1985; Koonce, 2011; Morrison, 2008). The construct of cohesion is especially important in organisations as it is linked to innovation, satisfaction, and increased performance. Koonce (2011) suggested that the size of the organisation has the potential to mediate the degree of cohesion an individual is feeling with other employees. It should be noted that social cohesion cannot be directly pursued as it is a performance variable dependent on the outcomes of other activities and conditions; however, organisations could help create environments that facilitate the predictors of cohesion.

Koonce (2011) proposed that rather than trying to alter cohesion directly, the underlying factors that lead to cohesion should be altered. Understanding that cohesion cannot be directly pursued is an important point to clarify because many organisations may try to increase organisational cohesion directly, only to be met with internal resistance. Koonce suggests that the following factors are favorable for

cohesion (when pursuing cohesion directly is not possible): fair policies, equity and social capital bonding.

Cohesion can be thought of as a kind of social glue. It refers to the degree of camaraderie within the group. Cohesive groups are those in which members are attached to each other and act as one unit. Generally speaking, the more cohesive a group is, the more productive it will be and the more rewarding the experience will be for the group's members (Beal et al., 2003; Evans & Dion, 1991). Members of cohesive groups tend to have the following characteristics: They have a collective identity; they experience a moral bond and a desire to remain part of the group; they share a sense of purpose, working together on a meaningful task or cause; and they establish a structured pattern of communication.

### *Group Cohesion*

Group cohesion refers to the forces that attract members of a group together. Over time, research shows that there is a strong connection between cohesion and group effectiveness. Cohesion plays a vital role in developing a high functioning group. Salas et al. (2015) give a deeper perspective of group cohesion that drives a team's success. Cohesion increases the group's motivation while offering satisfaction to members of the team. When members exercise loyalty to their teams, the group establishes trust and stirs the willingness of members to work within the same group. Cohesion functions in two ways, the social aspect, and task-oriented aspect. The socialfunction of cohesion refers to the interpersonal bonds amongst the members that foster good relationships between group members (pg. 5).

The affective function of cohesion provides emotional satisfaction to a team member. The authors acknowledge that members may join a group because of the emotional

impact derived from belonging to that group (pg. 9). Some members feel the need to belong to a group for the purpose of group pride; they feel it is an honor to belong to that group. Additionally, cohesion comes in terms of task orientation. The need to achieve the goal of the group brings about cohesion. Task as the instrumental function of cohesion, involves members aiming at maximizing the results while minimizing the penalties (pg. 11). Members commit themselves to the group to achieve the set goal and ensure they do not incur losses in the process. Each member needs to define the purpose of belonging to a given group and maximize on it toachieve cohesion, which is essential for the group's success.

## 2.3 Review of Relevant Theories

Theory is the body of knowledge that exists about a particular subject as asserted by Steinberg (2007). We need theory to aid us in predicting, improving communication, explaining and comprehending phenomenon in the field of communication. Since communication is key in every aspect of our lives be it as individuals, groups or organisations. In the sub-section below, I therefore use the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) to explore group communication processes in relation to organisational cohesion.

## 2.3.1 Communication Accommodation Theory

The theory that resonates most with this study is the communication accommodation theory. **Communication accommodation theory** (**CAT**) is a theory of communication developed by Howard Giles. This theory concerns "the behavioral changes that people make to attune their communication to their partner, and the extent to which people perceive their partner as appropriately attuning to them" (Bates, James; Taylor, Alan, 2016). This theory is concerned with the links between language, context, and identity (Gallois, Ogay & Giles, 2005).It focuses on both the

inter-group and inter-personal factors that lead to accommodation, as well as the ways that power, macro and micro-context concerns affect communication behaviors (Gallois, Ogay & Giles, 2005).

"Communication accommodation theorists focus on the patterns of convergence and divergence of communication behaviors, particularly as they relate to people's goals for social approval, communication efficiency, and identity" (Gallois, Cindy; Giles, Howard, 2015). "Convergence" refers to strategies through which individuals adapt to each other's communicative behaviors to reduce these social differences (Giles, Coupland & Coupland 1991).Meanwhile, "divergence" refers to the instances in which individuals accentuate the speech and non-verbal differences between themselves and their interlocutors(Giles, Coupland & Coupland 1991).Sometimes when individuals try to engage in convergence, they can also end up over-accommodating and despite their good intentions their convergence can be seen as condescending.

Communication accommodation theory is guided by mainly four assumptions:

*There are speech and behavioral similarities and dissimilarities in all conversations.*

*The way we perceive the speech and behaviors of another determines our evaluation of the conversation.*

*Language and behaviors have the ability to communicate social status and group belonging between people in a conversation.*

*Norms guide the accommodation process, which varies in its degree of appropriateness (Turner & West, 2010).*

The first assumption indicates that people bring their past experience to conversations. Therefore, communication is not only influenced by situational conditions and initial reactions but the "... social-historical context in which the interaction is embedded" (Giles & Ogay, 2007).People's attitudes and beliefs, derived from those factors, determine the extent to which they are willing to accommodate in a conversation. The more similarities they share with each other, the more likely for them to accommodate.

The second assumption is concerned with how people perceive and evaluate a conversation. Perception is *the process of attending to and interpreting a message*and evaluation is the *process of judging a conversation*(Turner & West, 2010). When someone enters a conversation, usually they first observe what takes place and then decide whether they should make adjustment to fit in. However, the decision about accommodation is not always necessary. Imagine the encounter of two strangers, they may have a random small talk and simply say goodbye. In this case, neither of them is likely to evaluate the conversation since they have little possibility to meet again.

The importance of language and behaviors is illustrated in the third assumption since they are indicators of social status and group belongings. When two people who speak different languages try to have a conversation, the language they agree to communicate in is more likely to be the one used by the higher status person. This idea of "salient social membership" (Giles & Ogay 2007)negotiation is well illustrated in the situation of an interview as the interviewee usually makes all efforts to identify with the interviewer by accommodating the way he speaks and behaves so that he can have more chance to secure the job.

The last assumption puts emphasis on social appropriateness and norms. Here norms are defined as "... expectations of behaviors that individuals feel should or should not occur in a conversation" (Turner & West, 2010).Those expectations give guidance to people's behaviors, helping them to figure out the appropriate way to accommodate. Most of the time, the accommodation made according to those norms are perceived socially appropriate. For instance, when a young person talks to the seniors in his family, he should avoid using jargons among his generation to show respect and communicate more smoothly.

Therefore, in group communication, the communication accommodation theory explains how people accept and adopt to the different persons within their groups and other groups and interact with each other towards achieving a common goal. This theory supports my research as it suggests that persons' language, experiences, norms and social status determine how they perceive other members therefore leading to group formation hence influencing the processes of group communication.

## 2.4 Review of Related Research

In this section, I present previous related research on processes of group communication for organisational cohesion with the aim of revealing the gap that exists in previous research. I have organised the sub-sections in order of what scholars say on the subjects of: group communication; organisational cohesion.

## 2.4.1 Previous Research on Group Communication

Documented studies on group communication foreground that studying groups is an intriguing social phenomenon. Groups are said to be the core of organisational function across all sectors and society as a whole as observed by Gastil (2009), Kozlowski and Ilgen (2006). Members of a group often share an identity as a group

and need to interact with one another to achieve group objectives which can be task-related or relational. Looking at the task perspective, they produce results for which they share responsibilities and these results can be pinpointed, measured and evaluated by others as sighted by Kozlowski and Bell (2003). According to Keyton and Beck (2009), the creation and sustenance of relationships is also an outcome of groups. Task and relational outcomes are both accomplished as group members work interdependently that is by depending on one another to accomplish these outcomes. Hence, at the center of any group model is both the verbal and non-verbal interaction among members as argued by Bonito and Sanders (2010). This is because the task and relational interdependencies cannot be predicted since groups are dynamic. The term *group dynamics* which was coined by Kurt Lewin (1948) encompasses those behaviors and psychological processes that occur within a group that is 'intragroup dynamics' or between groups that is 'intergroup dynamics.'

Research on communication processes and interaction processes has continually made some important contributions towards comprehending the micro-processes that constitute group interactions as sighted in Keyton and Beck (2009), Paletz, Schunn and Kim (2011), Zijlstra, Waller and Philips (2012).However, processes in groups are very difficult to capture because they are fluid and can change from minute to minute hence difficulty in identifying and validly measure. According to Chiu and Lehmann-Willenbrock (2016) and Herndon and Lewis (2015), in order to understand why a particular behavior occurs within a group interaction, researchers ought to account for the temporal sequencing of the behaviors of all group members and for multiple predictors that can explain why a certain behavior occurs, including previous behaviors, individual characteristics or other context factors hence the difficulty in understanding group communication processes.

Scholars working in the area of social signal processing have been making significant advances in the identification and analysis of small group communication, particularly in controlled settings as sighted in Gatica-Perez (2009). Hence it made it possible to provide fine-grained analyses of group interaction patterns and use these to automatically determine social constructs such as agreement/disagreement, cohesion, dominance, leadership or emotion in group interactions. However, these innovations are out of reach for group scholars as expertise is required to understand the practicalities of how data that is captured for human interpretation differ from data captured for automation hence limiting the flow of ideas from one discipline to another.

### 2.4.2 Organisational Cohesion

Morrison (2008) concluded in his examination of negative relationships in the workplace and the adverse effects they played on workgroup cohesion that, employees who reported at least one negative relationship in the workplace reported lower levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment; were involved with less cohesive workgroups and reported a greater likelihood of leaving their jobs. Morrison's research is of importance because it encourages organisations to promote cohesive workgroups and positive relationships among employees hence in the long run contributing to organisational cohesion.

Dysfunctional teams often form in the workplace and when they do, organisations must take action to correct the issue. However, before corrective action can take place, it is of importance to be aware of and recognise potential negative side effects as suggested by Liden, Wayne, Jaworski and Bennet (2004) and Morrison (2008). Quite a number of organisations fail to recognise the potential for negative consequences arising from dysfunctional work groups as well as the potential positive

teamwork can have when it is achieved in a conducive environment. Baumeister& Leary (1995), Collins & Parker (2010) further add that "benefits of group work range from fulfilling the human need to belong to increased productivity levels due to team efficacy."

From the above, it is apparent that organisational cohesion and groups within the organisation be they work or relational groups are inseparable entities. Kristen Ruga (2014) in her research of looking into the construct validity of organisational cohesion scale states that organisational cohesion is a multifaceted construct that has been defined and assessed in a multitude of ways. However, in her research, she defines organisational cohesion as "the extent to which employees within an organisation feel a sense of unity with one another." She further adds that practitioners are often faced with uncertainty in regards to the necessary assessment materials when trying to evaluate organisational cohesion and that an easily accessible and valid scale had yet to be created to measure organisational cohesion. The Organisational Cohesion Scale (OCS) is an eight-item assessment of an employee's perception of the cohesion they have experienced with their peers within an organisational setting. Kristen Ruga (2014) attempted to provide construct validity for the OCS. She conducted assessments of the convergent and discriminant validity of the OCS; although the results did not provide strong evidence for construct validity of the OCS, the confirmatory factor analysis and criterion validity provided support for additional research to be conducted.

According to Morgan, Salas, & Glickman (1994), organisations often place employees in groups to achieve common specified goals, forge relationships and increase overall productivity levels. When all employees are willingly able to contribute valuable information, the group can be highly successful. Those employees

can lead to highly functioning and productive units within the organisation that is capable of fulfilling both basic human needs and reach the organisation's desired productivity goals (Koonce, 2011; Neuman& Wright, 1999).

**2.5 Rationale for the Study based on Literature Review**

The focus of research on group communication has mostly revolved around task-related or relational issues which majorly look into how groups within an organisation work together and socialise. Some studies have also looked into how this affects the performance of the organisation. As stated above, group processes are difficult to capture since they are fluid and keep on changing hence this study seeks to look at how we can better comprehend group communication processes for organisational cohesion using the same parameters of task-related/relational issues and others mentioned in the review of processes of group communication. The reviewed related studies also analysed group communication using the quantitative approach of research and complex scientific machinery. This means that the participants were not regarded as co-researchers hence various core elements of group communication were not discussed in depth. There are several existing studies on group communication however very few look into the processes of group communication specifically in relation to organisational cohesion hence the core objective of this study.

Based on the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), it imperative to look into how over-accommodating certain individuals within a group can impact on the effectiveness of communication in certain instances. In the long run, how does this then affect the unity of the group therefore organisational cohesion.

**2.6 Summary**

In this chapter, I have reviewed literature on the subject of group communication processes and organisational cohesion by situating my study in the field of communication. I have highlighted the communications accommodation theory and shown its relevance to my study. Through this review, I have identified the gaps that the study seeks to contribute to. To address this gap, this study will utilise a qualitative approach to investigate the processes of group communication for organisational cohesion as is discussed in the next chapter.

**CHAPTER THREE**

**RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

**3.1  Introduction**

In this Chapter, I explain the research methodology by highlighting the research paradigm and give reasons for selecting the qualitative approach and the multiple case study method as well as the description of the data generation technique that I used. I also explain the sampling process, data analysis procedure used as well as issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations of this study. I then conclude by giving a summary of the whole chapter.

**3.2  Philosophical Paradigm**

As a researcher, I espouse to the social constructivist-interpretivist worldview as informed by Johnson (2008) because I believe that we all construct our own realities depending on our perceptions, interpretations and experiences hence there is no single viewpoint of the world. The concept seeks to acquire the cultural and institutional origin of meaning while evaluating the meaning from how people feel and perceive a concept. I sought to understand how we as diverse persons belonging to various groups depending on our interests communicate within those groups and even with other groups. Therefore, in all this complexity in diversity, how we work and live together cohesively to achieve a common goal is of interest to me since, "individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences – meanings directed toward certain objects or things" (Creswell, 2011).

This worldview enables me as a researcher to be very flexible as explained by Rubin and Rubin (2005) in Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011) hence I was in a position to adapt to unexpected problems and I was in a position to work out new solutions that would

make possible the generation of data to continue as the situation demanded. In line with this worldview, I adopted the qualitative design as explained below.

## 3.3  Research Approach

Iadopted a qualitative approach which is deemed flexible and seeks to generate and analyse holistic data using sufficiently rigorous, trustworthy and ethical methods and techniques as stated by Jwan & Ong'ondo (2011). This is because I intended to explore group processes in the communication process and how they can be comprehended to enhance the cohesiveness of an organisation by looking into the behaviours, attitudes, experiences and perceptions of the different participants that I interacted with. Group communication being a social/humanity subject that necessitates in-depth and flexible research; my reasoning is consistent with Creswell (2007), who states that the intent of qualitative research is to comprehend a particular social situation, event, role, group or interaction and also Dawson (2009) and Bell (2005) reiterate that qualitative research explores attitudes, behaviours and experiences in a natural setting.  This approach, I used through the multiple case study method as discussed below.

## 3.4 The Case Study Method

In line with qualitative research, I used the case study as a method of research which Gillham (2000) explains as a study that investigates a unit of human activity in the real world which in this case is group communication in the organisational context; which can only be understood in context that exists in the here and now to answer specific research questions and sees a range of different kinds of evidence which is in the case setting. Emphasis is Made by Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011) that, "a case study concentrates on experiential knowledge of the case and close attention is paid to the

influence of its social, political and other contexts. As such, optimising understanding of the case requires meticulous attention to the following; issue of choice, triangulation, experiential knowledge, contexts and activities."

This study is a case study of two institutions in Nairobi County, Kenya. These institutions, I believe gave me a chance for analysis of the experiences of the participants in depth using multiple techniques (triangulation) to generate data on the processes of group communication for the organisational cohesion by using multiple techniques to generate experiences from the staff and the subordinates.

There are generally three types of case study; intrinsic, instrumental and multiple case studies (Creswell, 2007; Yin 2009). This study is a multiple case study which according to Jwan & Ong'ondo (2011), focuses on the issue which is comprehending group communication processes for organisational cohesion rather than the case which are the chosen national organisations. In this study, the national organisations are of secondary interest as they only play a supportive role and facilitate our understanding of group communication processes (Stake 2005:445).The singularity is chosen because it is expected in some way to be typical of something more general (Ong'ondo, 2010).

### 3.5 Sampling

This is where I outline the procedure that I used to gather people, places or things to study as outlined by Holloway and Wheeler (2013). The study targeted employees in governmental institutions that embrace multi-culturism. These targeted respondents included employees from all positions from the managerial to semi-skilled employees working as subordinate staff. To ensure that the research reached a rich generalisation

of conclusion, respondents were chosen randomly while balancing on both genders to ensure equity and avoid bias ideologies from one gender.

In line with qualitative approach, I selected people/sites that aided me in understanding group communication processes. This understanding emerges from a detailed understanding of the individual/sites however Holloway and Wheeler (2013) also argue that sampling is a complex process that is informed by the research questions and theoretical considerations not forgetting the guidance of the phenomenon under study. Putting all this into consideration, I adopted the purposive sampling technique as a way of understanding group communication processes for organisational cohesion as discussed below.

### 3.5.1 Purposive Sampling Technique

I employed purposive sampling to obtain participants for this study in order to gain perspectives on group communication processes. I chose this technique because I selected participants who best guided me in comprehending the phenomenon by enabling me collect focused information. This was through selecting typical and useful cases only which also saved me on time and money as reiterated by Oso and Onen (2009). In this regard, I looked at public institutions within Nairobi, which carry out national affairs and employ diversely, hence have people from almost all the diverse backgrounds and with diverse experiences in Kenya. Such institutions would have a general representation in organisations within Kenya due to their diversity. Eventually, from a list of many organisations, I narrowed down to two which met the checklist I had.

I however worked with a small number of participants which is informed by Silverman (2013) who argues that qualitative inquiry tends to work with a small

number of cases which means sacrificing scope for detail. Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011) agree by emphasizing that "qualitative research is more considered in terms of detail of what we get from the cases, rather than the number of cases." From this perspective, I purposely chose a few from the two organisations from the management, central departments, support departments and collaborators. The number chosen in each department depended on the capacity which such divisions carry. Therefore, since management and collaborators are few, only two people were interviewed in each of those divisions. The technique of selecting co-researchers was also dependent on their experiences and knowledge of the organisational objectives, activities and their availabilities; being national organisations, some of the participants were out on fieldwork all over the country.

In the table below, I specify the criteria with which I chose my participants within the cases as guided by Mugenda (2013). I chose to draw and divide the participant's dependent on the current departments in the institutions since I believed it was representative of the whole institutions. It is therefore within those departments that further diversified the participants in order to get a reflective picture of the existing processes in groups.

**Table 1: Division of participants**

| Division | | Number |
|---|---|---|
| Management | Senior Deputy Directors and Heads of Departments | 2 |
| Central Departments | Officers working within the departments; inclusive of genders, different religions, race and age groups. | 10 |
| Support Departments | | 6 |
| Collaborators | | 2 |

## 3.6 Data Generation Techniques

I went to two organizations in Kenya so as to acquire information for the purpose of understanding the participants' views regarding group communication processes for the organisation's cohesion through in-depth interviews. The qualitative approach focused on the natural setting as elaborated by Creswell (2007)who says that qualitative researchers tend to generate data in the field at the site where the participants experience the issue or problem under study. He further observes that this up-close information is gathered by actually talking directly to the participants and seeing them behave and act within their contexts.

### 3.6.1 Interviews

An interview as a technique of generating data, involves direct verbal interaction between individuals. It is intended to get to what a participant in the research thinks; the attitudes of that person and/or to explore a person's reasons for thinking in a certain way or for carrying particular perceptions or attitudes. Interviews were the best applicable procedure for achieving the above-mentioned objective. Therefore, I interviewed some specifically selected participants as outlined above in the purposive sample (Cohen et al, 2007).

Although I embraced interviews as the best data collection procedure, they have some limitations such as refusal of respondents to give out some specific information and biasness in responding to some questions which I faced during my research. Some respondents especially of managerial positions declined to answer some questions and being recorded for fear of being quoted. To curb these limitations, I explained to the respondents the significance of this study, assured them of their confidentiality and asked questions which were general addressing the organisation more than personal questions.

I specifically used semi-structured interviews which according to Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011) allows for a deeper exploration of responses by participants by probing and exploring emerging dimensions that may not have been previously considered as pertinent aspects of a study. It is also a more preferable technique in qualitative research since it allows for flexibility and pursuance of interesting leads.

I used a language the participants were more comfortable with which were either English or Kiswahili which are both official languages of communication in Kenya hence transcending to use in national organisations. This, I believe made the participants feel more at ease hence interact with me more. I translated the Kiswahili language into English during transcription. I also audio-recorded almost all the interviews using a digital recorder and took personal notes as well. However, I ensured to seek prior permission for the use of the audio recorders and informed all the participants the purpose for my study and made it clear that they were at liberty to withdraw at any point during the interview. I had a challenge with one participant negating to be audio-recorded hence I only had to write down notes during the interview.

Also of importance, I generated an interview guide prior to the interviews where I summarized the content that I covered during the interviews. An interview guide generally, contains the framework for the interview however, as a researcher I had the freedom to pursue the questions in a different order and allocate more time to some questions other than to others depending on what I thought was more appropriate for discussion on the research topic with each participant as argued by Morgan and Guevara (2008), (I have appended a sample interview schedule at the appendices section, VI).

## 3.7 Data Analysis

Data in this study included transcribed material from the audio-recorded interviews and personal notes. Therefore, I analysed data by; transcribing, collating, editing, coding and reporting the data which involved assigning categories and putting together emerging issues into themes in an attempt to answer the earlier on mentioned research questions as explained by Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011).

Mugenda (2013) further adds that a researcher must repeatedly read a text to gain a deep sense of the data. This, he says, "helps a researcher to start understanding the structure of the data as well as be able to detect various categories and themes in the data. The themes or categories must be clearly distinct from each other. The categories and themes are then coded systematically. A more critical step is establishing the linkages and relationships among these categories or themes. This is the first step towards developing a matrix of the various elements that define the phenomenon the researcher is investigating."

I followed a six-point procedure as suggested by Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011) in analysing my data as I demonstrate below.

## 3.7.1 Transcribing the data

This is the first stage of data analysis. Mugenda (2013) states that, "transcription entails the transformation of hand written responses or voice recordings from respondents to organised, typed text." After collecting data in the form of interviews, I turned all the received participants' verbal data via audio-records into a written format. I ensured to capture all verbatim in my transcriptions and clearly labelled the word documents and filed them in a folder.

### 3.7.2 Re-familiarizing with the data

I read each transcript separately which was then in text form from each interview after transcription as described above. This helped me form a general idea of what the data was saying as well as helped me form initial thoughts regarding the data. These thoughts and ideas, I noted down on each of the transcripts on a printed form. The significance of doing this was to enable me "consolidate the data by removing unnecessary words and phrases for the purpose of the study" as described by Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011).

### 3.7.3  First Phase Coding

At this stage, I opened a new Microsoft Word (MS) file which contained clean transcripts from the above stage. I then went through the transcripts highlighting chunks that I felt were of interest to my study and assigned codes. This, I did with the guidance of my earlier on stated research questions and the scope of my study as advised by Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011).

### 3.7.4 Second Phase Coding

At this phase, I grouped similar codes together to avoid unnecessary overlaps and repetitions that I may have noted in the first phase of coding. I then merged several codes as well as downgraded while upgrading others hence I turned some codes into categories and grouping some codes under the new categories. I generated some themes and sub-themes at this phase as guided by Jwan & Ong'ondo, 2011.

### 3.7.5  Third Phase Coding

Finally, I grouped categories into themes that corresponded to the research questions earlier on posed as informed by Creswell (2007). Jwan and Ong'ondo further advise that some themes may emerge from the data that may not correspond to the research

questions but are of significance to the study. After I did a proper analysis of my data, I produced a report as I discuss below.

### 3.7.6   Production of the Report

This stage involved the final analysis of the data and a generation of a report. I embarked on the production once I was certain that I had developed appropriate themes by re-reading the coded third phase. As Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011) advise that the production of the report involves "telling the story from the mouth of the participants and telling it to the readers by paraphrasing the statements and only retaining a few direct quotes to give the report credibility." I was therefore cognizant of the need for inclusion of enough extracts, mainly for purposes of demonstrating the strength of the themes earlier on highlighted. I represented the findings in one chapter in line with the research questions. The rationale for this is to explain to the readers the themes developed under each research question and how they finally come in reality to comprehend group communication processes for enhancement of organisational cohesion, which is the main purpose of this study.

**Figure 1:** is a presentation of the entire data analysis process with the various stages interrelated. After these stages were completed, I developed a summary report identifying major themes and the associations between them, used graphics and direct quotations to present the findings and report the intensity –which refers to the number of times certain words and phrases or descriptions are used in the discussion (Kombo & Tromp, 2006;Creswell,2007).

```
                    ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
                    │  Interpreting the meaning of themes       │
                    │  /descriptions                            │
                    └─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                          ↑
                    ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
                    │  Interrelating themes/description         │
                    │  (grounded theory, case study)            │
                    └─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                           ↑                        ↑
                    ┌──────────────┐        ┌──────────────┐
                    │   Themes     │        │ Description  │
                    └──────────────┘        └──────────────┘
                           ↑                        ↑
┌──────────────┐    ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Validating   │    │  Coding the data (hand or computer)       │
│ the accuracy │    └─────────────────────────────────────────┘
│ of the       │                         ↑
│ information  │    ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
└──────────────┘    │  Reading through all data                 │
                    └─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                          ↑
                    ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
                    │  Organizing &preparing data for analysis  │
                    └─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                          ↑
                    ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
                    │  Raw data (transcripts, field notes,      │
                    │  images, etc)                             │
                    └─────────────────────────────────────────┘
```
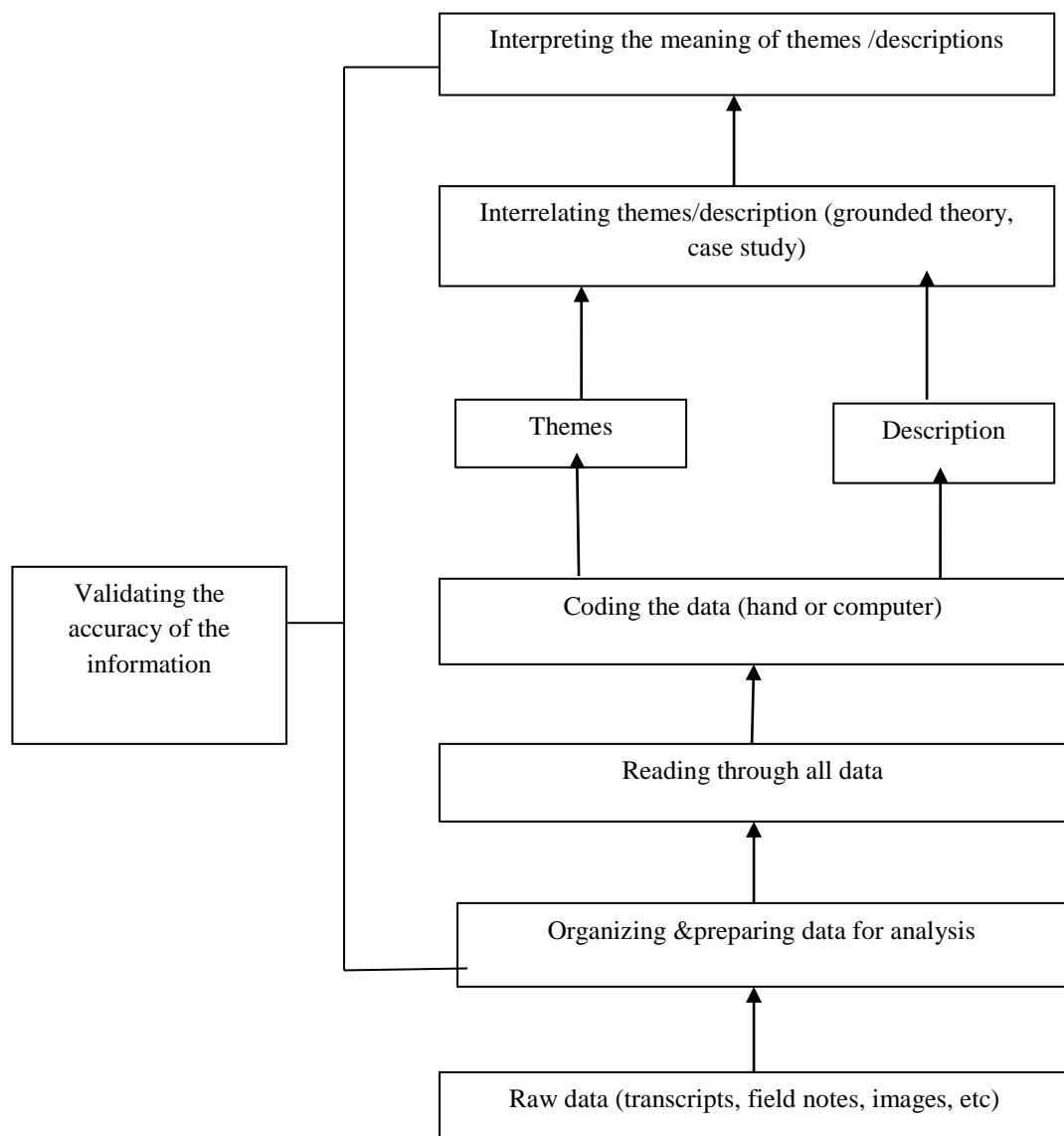
**Figure 1: Data analysis in Qualitative Research**

Source: Creswell, (2009-185): Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches (3[rd]ed)

**3.8 Trustworthiness of the Study**

It is necessary to include details of the steps a researcher has taken in ensuring that their study can be trusted. Trust is extremely vital since the researchers themselves, peers, the academic community in the discipline of study, other researchers in related fields and readers in general might at one point want to refer to and utilise the study in various ways (Jwan &Ong'ondo, 2011).Trustworthiness is the degree or extent of

certainty that the research process is truthful, careful and rigorous enough to qualify to make claims that it does (Given & Saumure, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Litchman, 2006). Trustworthiness is divided into various elements that I look into in the following sub-sections.

### 3.8.1 Credibility

I ensured credibility of the study by reviewing key concepts in the study, exercising triangulation, providing a chain of evidence and member checking (Jwan & Ong'ondo, 2011). The credibility of the study is also the extent to which this study investigated the claims that comprehension of group communication processes can enhance organisational cohesion. I sought to investigate and report exactly how group communication processes at the organisations can be harnessed forcohesion of the organization by quoting some of the respondents' words in verbatim. Ialso used the principles of triangulation by using converging information from various participants in two different organisations to ensure that there is access to different perspectives as this added value to this study by giving detailed information.

### 3.8.2 Transferability

The transferability of a study may also be termed synonymously as the generalizability of the study and that is the extent to which the findings of this study or aspects of it could be relevant to or applicable to other contexts in which this study was not done or other people who were not actually involved in the study but are engaged in the issues that were studied (Jwan & Ong'ondo, 2011). I believe that this study could be transferable to other organisations since issues of group communication processes are issues that all organisations face and have to deal with on a daily basis since all persons have different personalities, beliefs and experiences and they bring with them these aspects to the organisations.To ensure and encourage

the members of the organisation to work in harmony and as one; issues of group communication processes have to be looked into.

### 3.8.3 Dependability

This is the extent to which this study provided detailed and clarity of the entire research process in a way that it makes it feasible for a reader to visualise and appreciate and for a researcher if necessary to replicate the study and get similar results (Jwan & Ong'ondo, 2011; Yin, 2009; Mason 2002). I have ensured to providedetailed descriptions of the steps I followed in the multiple case study as a way of enhancing dependability and I have also made as many steps as operational as possible. I conducted research as if there was always someone looking on my shoulder in a way that makes it possible to conduct a similar study in another contextas suggested by Yin (2009; p.38).

### 3.8.4 Confirmability

This is the extent of neutrality and to which the findings of this study are free of both internal and external influences either of the researcher, participants or institution (Jwan & Ong'ondo, 2011; Gillham, 2000). It also refers to the extent to which results of data analysis are based on facts from the findings as such results should be derived from the actual data and should be free from the researcher's own subjective or emotional values. Putting in mind what different scholars have said on the issue, I sought to present this study's findings in their true form by taking due care to ensure that this study was not contaminated by such influences that could interfere with the trustworthiness in order to avoid misrepresenting the findings (Jwan & Ong'ondo). I therefore, ensured to acknowledge my position in relation to the research context by explaining certain views I hold on my subject as I engaged in data generation.

## 3.9 Ethical Considerations

All research situations involving human participants usually emphasize on ethical considerations (Jwan & Ong'ondo, 2011). These are the moral principles that guide research from its inception through its completion and publication of results (ESRC, 2005). Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011) further add that generating data from human participants should carefully and systematically consider the ethical dimensions since these are not always immediately apparent. Creswell (2009) explains that during the identification of the research problem, the researcher should identify the problem that will benefit individuals being studied and not one that will further marginalise them. In addition, he argues that in developing the purpose statement and research questions, proposal developers need to convey the purpose of the study that will be described to the participants to guard against deception. With this in mind, I ensured to adhere to this requirement throughout this study by:

### 3.9.1 Negotiating Access

I ensured to seek permission to access the geographical context and participants from the relevant authorities in the organisations. This, I did by issuing a detailed written letter on the specifics of the research i.e. aim and purpose of study and expected duration. A letter of introduction from my university, Moi University was sought and a legal permit from the necessary authorities was also acquired to help in negotiating access in the two institutions.

### 3.9.2 Avoidance of harm

I presented to the university review board this thesis for approval and guidance. The work plan included logistics in terms of various tasks that needed to be done in the whole research process and the time frame for each task. Creswell (2009) reaffirms the need to uphold ethics during data collection by emphasizing the need to guard

against putting participants at risk, and respecting vulnerable populations by having their research plans reviewed by the Institutional Review Board.

### 3.9.3 Informed Consent

An informed consent form was developed by me for participants to sign before they engaged in the research Creswell (2009).  This gave an assuarity that their rights were protected during data collection, elements of which included: my identification, the institution I am from, how the participants were selected, the purpose of the research, the benefits for participating in the research, the level and type of participant involvement, guarantee of confidentiality, provision of names and persons to contact if questions arise.

### 3.9.4 Confidentiality

I ensured anonymity and confidentiality of participants by keeping their names secret and by also not exposing who gave certain specific information so that any other person was unable to identify who gave me information and this I did by using codes assigned to the different participants. This helped keep the information for the intended purpose and thus within the boundaries of the shared consent which according to Jwan & Ong'ondo (2011) anonymity means that the researcher should not name the person and it would also involve not including information about an individual or research site. Due to the sensitive nature of my study, I have also chosen not to expose or give specifications of my research sites as I thought that if identified, the institutions would feel targeted hence I would not get as much information and there would be biasness on the readers of this thesis.

**3.10 Summary**

In this chapter, research methodology has been discussed with detailed reasons for choosing the methodological approach used. I have identified the qualitative approach used in the study. I have also explained the multiple case study method in line with the qualitative approach. The study is a multiple case of two institutions in Nairobi, Kenya and it is important to note that the selected institutions have been chosen as instruments to help understand the focus of the study, which is Group communication processes. I used interviews (semi-structured) as a data generation technique. Trustworthiness and ethical concerns that have also been raised and I have also clearly outlined a process of approaching the issues.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS**

## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the findings of the study based on the following research questions: What group communication processes are commonly reported in organisations? How do these group communication processes influence organisational cohesion? What are the perceptions on the influence of group communication processes on organisational cohesion?

### 4.1.1 Scope Redefined

As earlier stated in the scope, the first question which was: what group communication processes are commonly reported in organisations?, where group communication refers to communication between identifiable groups of three people or more people and group processes connotes to the various complex interrelationships that influence group thoughts, decisions and behaviors; that occur within group (intragroup processes) or between groups (intergroup processes) with potential influence on organisational cohesion, focused on the different types of groups that exist within the organisations. I investigated the kind of groups that exist in organisations, the reasons for membership within one or several groups, the existence of more or less fixed (permanent) groups and temporary ones, the various characteristics and functions of various groups. Here, I sought to know the general view and approach of group communication in organisations.

For the second question, 'how do these group communication processes influence cohesion in organisations?' I was concerned by how organisations handle issues such as an individual's expressed thoughts and feelings coupled with relationships between members of a group in an effort to comprehend group communication processes. I

also explored the various elements that affect group communication processes and their ultimate impact on enhancing organisational cohesion. It was crucial under this question to establish how members of groups can strike a balance between personal issues and group cohesion; issues of allegiance, whether to group or the organisation and how such conflicts are handled.

Lastly, for the third question that sought to explore perceptions on the influence of group communication processes on organisational cohesion looked into members' perception on the relationship between communication and enhancement of cohesion within the group and organisation as a whole. The main focus of this question is on the mechanisms the organisation put in place to ensure enhancement of organisational cohesion.

With the above scope in mind, I went to the field for data collection through the use of in-depth interviews. I generated data primarily from the interviews and later transcribed all the audios. Below I show the symbols assigned to interview transcripts, and the labels I have assigned to each. The symbols are used throughout the chapter:

**Table 2: Symbols assigned to Interview Transcripts**

| Symbol | Source of Data |
|--------|----------------|
| A-N | Interview with members of Organization **N** |
| B-N | |
| C-N | |
| D-N | |
| E-N | |
| F-N | |
| G-N | |
| H-N | |
| I-N | |
| J-N | |
| A-K | Interview with members of Organization **K** |
| B-K | |
| C-K | |
| D-K | |
| E-K | |
| F-K | |
| G-K | |
| H-K | |
| I-K | |
| J-K | |

## 4.2 Data Presentation

The findings for the research questions as generated from the research tool of the study (interviews) are represented in the next section.

## 4.2.1 Communication processes commonly reported in organisations

The first question was: What group communication processes are commonly reported in organisations? As stated in the scope, this question sought to investigate; what kind of groups exist in organisations, the reasons for membership within one or several groups, the existence of more or less fixed (permanent) groups and temporary ones and the various characteristics and functions of various groups.

**Types of groups that exist and reasons for memberships within organisations**

The study found out that there are very many types of groups within organisations categorised into two of either official or social groups. Apart from the whole organisation being termed as a group (an entity), the organisations are further divided into departments whereby each department is tasked with specific functions. The study found out that the most common *types of groups* found in organisations are the groups created based on the different functions performed by the people within the group. People who perform the same functions within an organisation tend to group themselves together even beyond the workplace. Since most organisations are divided into departments, the members of one department let's say a communications department in an organisation will tend to group themselves more as opposed to grouping with other members of other groups as one respondent **A-K** put it,

> *"...now since within a section you expect staff who are in one way interact. They'll form a group because of their identity with that particular function so you have those kinds of groups and there are many avenues of meetings."*

However, this does not mean that people from other departments do not interact but just members of the same department tend to spend more time together and interact more hence tend to associate with each other more. Through the common assignments, duties and common workplace like sharing one office, members of the same department tend to spend more hours together hence; they directly or indirectly organise themselves into a group. these groups which sometimes are situational, come up due to assignments or projects which the team in an organisation are working on hence necessitating the formation for easy accomplishment of such tasks, proper communication during the task and good subdivision of the duties within the formed

group. Therefore, due to the setting and the organogram of the organisation, such groups come out as respondent **B-N** puts it:

> *"..... there are departments, we have several departments and…the people in one department work closely together and as much as we interact with everyone from every other departments, you'll find that in my department, we're three of us, we'll be more closer because we work together like right now I'm just from seeing my senior officer, we're developing some activities together, something that I will not do with my colleague say X who is in Communication so I know more about my colleague Y better than I do X just because we're in the same department."*

Apart from the departmental groups that are formal, and a segment of the entire organisation, which is a group as an entity, other formal groups touch the whole organisation such as SACCOs that have constitutions, officiating members and have recognition from the organisation. Members with common goals or interests like development come together and form SACCOs that will propel them towards achieving their development goals. The groups are formal because there are rules or policies that each member follows as stipulated in that constitution which are the guiding principles for the group. Such groups can have members from any department within the organisation, regardless of the ethnicity and the social class of the person if the person is a member of the organisation. Other groups of the same caliber that are official and cut across the entire organisation include welfare organisations where members have the obligation of monthly contributions to have a kitty to help on welfare matters of the members as respondents**C-N and E-K**put it;

> *"...there is the general group which is more of the welfare association which is voluntary, its membership and quite a huge number of members of this organisation, interns and staffs are part of it."*

*"Other than the official demarcation within the groupings within the organisation, we also have groups that have been formed for purposes of development of the welfare of the staff as dictated by the staff through the challenges they have been able to go through and therefore they have been able to come up with specific organisations that help them in aaah…sorting out challenges that may arise in the process"*

It is within those functional groups that the members further form other groups, which are more informal whose objectives are not necessarily work related. I would term these groups as social groups. In the course of interactions, members who share common social interests like religion, ethnicity and even family issues come together to form a group. Under these groups, the employees of the organisation, then join these groups, without the knowledge or approval of the management to satisfy their social needs on the job. The objectives of such groups can change from time to time and the role-played is not official without a valid constitution or rules recognised by the authority of the organisation. The employees as per their likes, interests, and attitudes form the groups. These groups are formed to satisfy a specific need and some are even temporary whereby once the needs are satisfied; the groups are then later on disintegrated as respondent **F-N** put it;

*"…experiences that one is going through like for example me when I used to have a colleague of mine…the fact that she was still a new mother, I was going through pregnancy and everything, I used to find myself relating more with her because of whatever she was going through and whatever I was going through so based on current experiences…"*

From the study, some of the informal groups mentioned by the respondents as available in the institutions include *Chamas,* ethnic based organisations and fellowship groups. Under these groups, the employees of the organisation form or find themselves in groups without the approval of the management to satisfy their social

needs on the job. Other such groups based on current experiences include groups based on bereavement, weddings, and baby showers.

The common informal group mentioned by the members is *Chamas,* which are groups, instituted to help in simple development projects. Members with similar projects such as purchase of households group together and agree on the contributions per meeting with most of the contributions geared towards one person with the instructions of undertaking a physical project. The groups have no restrictions of membership since they are based on common interests hence parties sharing common interest join them.

There are also other social groups that are formed dependent on the type of employees within the organisation and these are based on; ethnicity, religion, economic status/background, gender, education background and status. All these groups are informal and have members with common interests or defined by the same principles such as same Christian beliefs, same ethnic background or the economic class members fit in as respondent **G-K**puts it;

> *"....I know there is a grouping of people from Meru and the surrounding areas...I mean the Ameru as a people, I know there is a grouping from that region, I'm not a member but I know it exists and it has a structure, I mean leadership and they communicate, they meet and...and...ummm, it's a structured group so it exists and I know there's one from one from western and then there are groups...like I know there is a group, a fellowship among or call it a fellowship but I know it's structured, as a fellowship it's a member of the sacco...."*

**Preference, characteristics and functions of different types of groups**

The study found out that different members in an institution have various guiding principles on choosing to join one group over the other. There are certain groups that members join by default due to the placement like in the departments and in the

organisation as a whole. Such groups have no alternative and members cannot choose on whether to be there or not. However, other groups, which do not apply to all members in certain areas of focus, have members joining them based on their interests and life goals as the respondents noted. Since the groups are optional, one can choose to be in more than one group according to his/her ability to manage them without conflict of time. All the correspondents who took part in the research note that one can choose a group they deem suitable. The study also found out that some people, who have no interest at all in the groups, choose to remain unattached to any group in the organisation rather than the official and necessary ones such as the departments like respondent **C-K**puts it:

> *"...I may not belong to the group on paper however I take part in some of the issues within the organisations that the welfare group advocates for or lobbies for…for instance if its issue of burial or wedding arrangements, sometimes we fundraise and during the fundraising even if I'm not part of the group, I can still contribute for personal contribution."*

Among the reasons mentioned by the participants on why they choose one group over the other are personal interests. Such interest demand to be met hence one will look for a group that meets them to the best. This is outside the groups that one is compelled to belong to due to the demands of the organisation. In an institution, one will choose to be in a group such as the 'official WhatsApp group' to meet the interest of receiving communication, the official announcements, developments and other vital information from the administration. Any member who values communication and would wish to be updated on the current developments pertaining the institution will be a member of the group. The principle as the study found is applicable to all other groups, which members join to serve their interests as respondent **A-K** and**B-K**note;

> *"…I mean choosing to belong to one group and not the other one, it's where your interests are met, now if it's like a housing scheme group, you can see that there is an aspect of investment and people are really interested in doing investment for future undertakings, so what you find is that depending on my own interests then I would prefer to belong to this particular group."*

The study also found that members choose one group over the other due to situations that necessitate them to be in a group. When allocated different assignment in the department or the entire organisation for example, one will focus on a group in which he/she has common assignment with the members. Organising such groups will aid in the task execution and ease subdivision of roles to have timely delivery of the products. In other situations, the participants noted short welfare groups such as wedding preparations, baby showers and burial groups, which are formed outside the major welfare groups when either of the mentioned issues affect one of close members like in the department.  Such situations make people to choose the group to join although such groups last for a short while after the task intended is over. They serve short-term interests as respondent **G-K**notes

> *"…I have chosen to be in the welfare because there are eventualities that I cannot adequately plan for that will have to happen, I mean they are inevitable, they'll happen and I will need the support of a group…I think the other groupings will more or less be doing the same things so I don't to stretch myself so thin…I would rather concentrate on one or two and do good by them and I believe by the….if need arises they'll be a position to help…"*

Additionally, the study found out that other principles that make members choose one group over the other include the groups that share same or common ideological goals with the member and group that will help one achieve a personal goal. There are members geared towards development and they will choose groups such as Saccos, which have development plans. Members in the Sacco have common ideologies with the member joining the group and eventually, through pursuing this ideology, they

will help the new member to meet his/ her personal goals of development. People, as the participants noted are derived into specific activities due to challenges they face when they try such activities alone hence the resolution to join a group that will aid them in places they were challenged.

> *"...whether that particular group has membership that you ascribe to, ideologies, you know...objectives that you ascribe to and of course if the people in that particular group share your ideals or yeah...and basically that, you're looking out..."(D-N)*

> *"...you know in most cases human beings are driven into specific activities by either the challenges they come across in life or other objectives that they may develop that may inform their reasoning to the point that they feel they need to achieve an ultimate objective which they feel they would otherwise not be able to achieve individually..."(E-K)*

Lastly, the study found out that people choose one group over the other due to their ethnic, social status and religious backgrounds. The participants observed that there are ethnic groups such as the one aligned to people from Meru, *Ameru,* among others that are formed due to people of same ethnicity finding themselves in one place. When such groups exist and one has the feeling of joining a group of such caliber, he/she will join the one that is aligned to his/her tribe. As noted by the study, members of the two institutions belong to different social classes defined by their job positions and job groups. Through such status, they tend to belong to groups with members who share the same social class. Such informal groups are for social issues like parties, and other social functions, which feature a certain class. Employees in the institutions also belong to different religious affiliations with some from the Catholic faith and others from the protestant side. With the religious groups that perform mass and fellowship respectively, one will choose a group from which he/she is affiliated to and that which will serve their religious demands accordingly.

*"...just making friends, within those groups it's usually very easy to make friends and easy to interact with them rather than just interacting with everyone generally. So...within those groups, I would want to make more friends but then it has helped me make very close..."* ***(H-N)***

*"...for the religious groups it's because sometimes you need that spiritual nourishment or encouragement when I can talk to the colleagues. If its current experiences sometimes when I need to consult what I'm going through maybe raising a baby and then that I consult with that..."* ***(F-N)***

*"...I make a decision to maybe join the small Christian community for example the small group that we have here in the organization called St. Kizito, we come normally together to pray and to bring our lives together. We grow together spiritually and we are also able to help one another on how to tackle life issues because you know today you have to put God first as the first priority in your life..."* ***(H-K)***

## 4.2.2 How Group Communication Processes Influence Cohesion in Organisations

In the second research question, 'how do these group communication processes influence cohesion in an organisation?' My intention was to establish how intra-group communication promotes inter - group coexistence within the organisation. This I intended to find out by looking into some of the communication channels, media and patterns that the groups use be it among each other or with other groups and implications of these on organisational cohesion. I explored existing or implicitly, miscommunication or misunderstanding between the groups and, how such issues are handled within the organisation. I explored whether the organisations have any guidelines on groupings and group membership – documented or not? Do the organisations identify healthy and unhealthy communication within or between groups – how? Are there any institutionally recognised intra or inter -group communication channels, media or patterns, on what criteria? What happens to illegal

or potentially "damaging groups? It was of importance to explore issues of allegiance under this question; whether the allegiance was to the group or organisation. How do the organisations handle conflicting group communication in terms of allegiance to the groups and institutions?

**Intra and Inter- Group Communication Styles within Organisations**

Groups interact internally through social media platforms such as WhatsApp groups more so for the informal ones like the case of *Chamas* where they can even handle an issue entirely and make a conclusion. This method according to the study appeared as the sole and effective method of internal communication of the groups since other methods such as emails seemed more official. Other effective methods include use of phone calls and social meetings like in a cafeteria, during coffee or lunch breaks.

> *"...they have the chamas, if its phone, they communicate, they have their WhatsApp groups and they also have the..."* ***(B-N)***

The study also established that with the official groups recognised by the institutions such as different departments, there is structured communication aimed at achieving the institutions' goal. The leaders for example have to get in touch through briefings, which entails the two groups, or through use of the same channel when same information has to move to both groups. They can also send emails, which are official and facilitate action especially when one group is looking for assistance from another group.

> *"...our organisation knows that they exist; they play a specific role that enhances the productivity of the staff to the institution. That means that any time there is need for interaction between my organisation and...the two organisations that I guide with any outside organisation and depending on whether it's official hours or office hours or utilisation of facilities within the institution...there's always formal communication..."* ***(B-N)***

Whenever the groups wish to raise their concerns and communicate to the institution, they use official means of communication such as writing an email or letters that are physically delivered to the relevant authorities for action.

> *"Whenever they have their issues they raise them through those WhatsApp groups, discuss and then if there is an action that is to be taken up with the management, then they take it up, either address it through the institution's welfare group by writing a memo or by writing an email or they take it directly with the senior staff members involved through the same, same channels…"* **(H-N)**

From the study conducted, communication in various organisations happen both in formal and in informal capacities, however it varies depending on the department and type of group. Organisations incorporate both upward and downward communication channels. Heads of departments or CEOs pass information to their juniors in a downward channel that is from the management to the lower-level employees. Such communication happens when the management has work to allocate to their juniors or some duties that need delegation. On the other hand, employees pass information to their seniors in an upward channel. If an employee has information for their supervisor or CEO, he or she passes it on through an upward channel as respondent **B-N** says;

> *"…it's both ways but majorly it does from the management to the employees or rather to the HODs to the people … but still, the juniors will also communicate to their bosses like giving an example of me, I'll not be in for the next two weeks… I'll do an email to my senior… to the senior program officer but I'll CC my HOD so like I'm passing this message that I'll not be in for this period and this other period, yes, they know but just making it official and sending an email, so it also happens both and all…"*

The study found out that the most common types of media used in communication involve both written and verbal formats. Verbal communication includes making of telephone calls and passing of information in organisational meetings. Written

communication involves sending of emails, memos, circulars and short message services (S.M.S). From the research, both organisations use written communication to share information. However, with technological advancements, firms are nowadays adopting the use of social platforms to pass information be it formal or informal. The most preferred media is through WhatsApp. Though considered for social communications and interactions, today organisations use the application to share messages. The platform provides convenience since it has no time limit. Unlike emails that individuals rarely access except while at work, employees use WhatsApp at any time either during working days or during weekends, during the working hours and beyond working time. the application presents high chances of everyone getting information compared to others as respondent B-N and **C-N** put it;

> *"... There's a WhatsApp or an official WhatsApp where all of us can share what activities we're involved in at each particular time…"*

> *"... people have embraced more of WhatsApp communication, even for official things... unlike other applications, WhatsApp has become the most convenient because first it's easy to form a group… you can easily and communicate… you can communicate within the official working days and even over the weekends and most people nowadays are fond of using WhatsApp …at wee hours of the night so people feel that because people are glued to it anytime maybe the chances that messages can be reached are very high on WhatsApp."*

**Management of Communication Channels for organisational cohesion**

According to the study, sharing of information using the various communication channels in an organisation, pose numerous challenges. Some of information not reaching the intended receiver for failing to access the channel used, information delays, misinterpretation of the message and dissemination of distorted or contradicting information. All these issues depend on the relationships between the receiver and the sender, the information being shared; whether it is related to the firm

or not, and the position of the individuals involved in communication. Such issues are prone to arise in a firm, the organisation needs to conduct a timely management to avoid communication breakdown.

From the study, communication done through social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook become more challenging to manage compared to the old formal communication channels such as emails, memos and circulars. To curb such issues, various organisations put in place management strategies to avoid communication breakdown. Some of the management strategies include; using multiples channels to pass information. For instance, there are individuals who give an excuse of not receiving information through maybe email because they did not read their emails during a given time. Organisations opt to use memos, notice boards, SMS, WhatsApp messages or verbal information sharing to avoid such an issue as respondent D-N states;

> *"... The organisation adopts an approach where you don't have to necessarily use one channel so that if you're using a memo to communicate to staff, you also do an email so that in any event, no one will claim not to have received the communication..."*

To avoid the challenges that come along with use of social media for official communication, organisations have communication personnel who manage the groups and ensure group members observe relevance and authenticity when communicating. Most organisations appoint an individual and accord that person the authority to pass information to the others. Such an individual passes information on behalf of the firm showing the position of the corporation on a given issue. Such individuals have the authority to take disciplinary action against members spreading distorted information. This ensures that information stems from one individual or a central point that members can directly reach out to for clarification as respondent D-K says;

> *"...one person is appointed to be like the main person who passes the information, when we receive information from a certain specific individual; we know that is the official position of the organisation..."*

Additionally, firms put in place rules and standards that guide communication in the organisation and all staff have an obligation to adhere to given guidelines. For instance, if a junior staff needs to share some official information, he or she has to follow protocol before disseminating the information. The protocol followed includes having to pass the information through the supervisor, departmental head who shares the same with the CEO for approval. In downward communication, the managers may share information with departmental leaders who in turn pass the same to the junior staff as respondent B-K, B-N and E-N allude;

> *"...so most of the time communication is actually done from top to down... through the memos, if I want to write to the director, I cannot write directly to the director, I have to write to my supervisor so that he forwards it to my boss who then...it goes that way and if communication is the other way round then it start from the director, then to a senior deputy director, then cascades up to 'Mwananchi wa chini kabisa'...yes, the lower cadres"*

> *"...for memos I know before you release a memo out there it has to be approved by the CEO"*

> *"...in formal circles because is dictated by certain norms, certain requirements, certain procedures and processes then it is strictly adhered to in that we're all required to conform to certain standards and specification but now that we're talking about the informal conversations"*

**Miscommunication and Misunderstandings in the groups**

It is evident from the study that considering the processes in a group, misunderstandings in groups are inevitable. The misunderstandings vary from individual level to group levels. Nevertheless, they usually result in conflicts between individuals or within the whole group. The challenges also vary depending on the

channel of communication used within a given group. Spreading the wrong information is one of the mix-ups that we find in groups. Both written and verbal communications channels open up an avenue for rumor mongering and spreading of information that lacks authenticity. For instance, in written format, people perceive information shared wrongly.

When engaging in verbal communication, some people include personal opinions and end up distorting the information. In the end, conflicts come up giving rise to disharmony in the group. Another challenge that groups face is sharing of insufficient information. For instance, a supervisor assigns a junior staff some work with sketchy details. The employee will end up performing the task poorly, failing to meet the stipulated deadline or doing the task wrongly. Such a challenge makes it difficult for individuals in the group or department to function properly giving rise to misunderstanding as respondent B-N narrates an example of such a scenario:

> *"...then when I talked to her, no you had not given me right information, the information was not sufficient, I felt you had not done your work well..."*

Another challenge that faces groups is lack of clarification of issues rising from the information shared. When information lacks clarity people engage in extensive reactions and end up clashing against each other. Accompanying lack of clarity is miscommunications either from the individual who shares information or amongst group members. Miscommunication arises when the message gets a different reception by the receiver hence distorting meaning. Usually, when individuals responsible for sharing information fail to orient members on the main point of the message, the recipient lack the full details giving rise to miscommunication.

Miscommunication and lack of clarity stir criticism as respondent D-K, F-N and H-N confirm;

> *"Yeah…definitely, you know like I would say especially where matters are not well clarified, definitely people will tend to misunderstand each other and people will take their own views…"*

> *"...completing a task then that causes a misunderstanding then sometimes someone not understanding the task that they've been given…"*

> *"Some of the misunderstandings that I would probably talk about are mostly those that arise from miscommunications. Sometimes you realise that group members probably propose one or two things within the social group but then the others fail to understand or they take it in a different aspect or probably if it is a criticism that has been pointed out to the group members, there are others that take it personally"*

Another misunderstanding in groups according to the research is the failure to meet the group's expectations. Members of a group always have clearly stipulated expectation. When the management fails to meet their needs, they develop resistance. On top of that, failure to complete assigned tasks creates misunderstandings between the employer and employees. Additionally, the management may set unrealistic expectations for their juniors creating a conflict between the employee and employers as respondent E-K eludes;

> *"Misunderstandings normally come when group members' expectations are either not achieved or some of them have been trodden on or there has been lack of information…"*

Some organisations face the challenge of members mixing their private lives issues into work place matters. When personal matters affect work issues, performance becomes low and usually individuals fail to meet the expected results. Another mix-up is the stereotyping effect. Individuals hold perception about their fellow employees

depending on the individual's background or gender. With perceived opinions about others, the relationship between members becomes poor as respondent F-N says;

> *"...Then sometimes the background of ...the background, perceptions and what...nature of someone for lack of a better word, if maybe you come from where you look down upon women then sometimes if someone maybe a woman tries to do something then you try to...tend to rubbish it all the time..."*

People within a given group hold diverse viewpoints on any given issue. However, they choose to remain in the same group depending on the factors that led to them being in the same group. Sometimes varying opinions become advantageous by offering diverse approaches to an issue and sometimes they create conflicts especially when each individual purposes to stick with their opinion for personal interest or some withhold information helpful to the group as respondent G-K puts it;

> *"...we can misunderstand and still remain in the group; I mean we have not disagreed...eeh but we're not seeing things from the same angle"*

Personal agendas also lead to misunderstandings in groups. Sometimes, people join groups for personal gain such as to get a promotion. When they lack an avenue to push their agendas, they become dissatisfied and choose to either be inactive or fail to participate within the group as respondent H-N argues;

> *"...There are people who join these groups because they want to push their own personal agendas, to be recognised, they want to be seen as playing some of the most important roles and whenever they don't get the recognition that they want, they tend to withhold..."*

In solving the issues that arise in groups, it depends on the seriousness of the issue and the level of escalation of the problem. If it is at the group level, individuals handle it at group level. In relation to the research finding, the group can hold open forums

where every member can speak freely. At such meetings, an individual airs their

grievances freely and seek for solutions collectively as respondent H-N says:

> *"...One way is through a one-on-one meeting where people just sit together and then just talk about these issues and if they are underlying issues that need solutions"*

However, some challenges become cumbersome to solve at the peer's level. In such

cases, the group can decide to call a senior person or an impartial colleague to help

solve the issue. Situations that necessitate a third party are those that the group feels

they cannot handle due to everyone having stakes or they simply cannot agree on a

specific decision. These individuals can be the Head of Department or the Human

Resource Manager as respondent A-N, C-N and F-N agree;

> *"We ourselves do handle them, there's a boardroom in the institution where we can go, sort out our issues there or we look for a senior person..."*

> *"...or the HR can come and solve...if it's a matter, depends on how grave the matter is..."*

> *"...you can bring in an impartial colleague to try to intervene or we can just have meetings with the two but you bring in an impartial person..."*

Another strategy used by groups to solve issues is having occasional staff training on

group processes and team building. Such trainings can be staff education days, team

building sessions. During such sessions, the facilitators handle issues that affect

various groups constructively while reminding the members on the essence of

embracing group processes and unity. From the study, it is evident that staff training

coupled with continuous communication within the group helps solve most issues

such as miscommunications, lack of clarity and communication delays. This is

evident through respondent E-K's opinion;

> *"Through creating education days…days where people can be able to interact with one another, understand what the objective of that grouping is, what are our achievement as at now and what is our roadmap to the next place…"*

Additionally, application of company rules and standards of operation also help mitigate group challenges. When individuals join groups, they go through an orientation of the set rules and regulations that govern the organisation's behavior and conduct. Any challenge that relates to the rules requires a solution from the rule as stated by respondent G-K;

> *"…if it's a disagreement that touches on why we came together, definitely it can be sorted by the rules of that organisation…"*

**Organisational guidelines on groupings and group memberships**

Formation of groupings within organisations happen in two instances; those that follow organisational guidelines on groupings and memberships and those that have no guidelines. Some organisations have no information about the small existing groups hence they have no control of their operations. In some organisations, the human resource department provides HR manuals that guide groups on how they ought to function. Other firms have a guideline on work ethics that govern formations and operations of groups. Respondent I-K and D-K agree by stating;

> *"Yes…we have a HR manual that once you're employed, you're given a manual and that manual, stipulates what you're supposed to do and what not to do. For example, in the social groupings, you cannot join …there are rules that there are some groups that you cannot just join…"*

Operations in smaller groupings find their way to the communication department especially when unhealthy communication goes around the company. Some of the means of getting such information is through grapevine that goes on in the corridors

of the firm since rumors have a way of getting out and far away. Other avenues include details that come up during occasional meeting where people raise up issues or through the suggestion box.

**Existence of potentially "damaging" groups**

Participants of this study had varied opinions on the issue of *damaging group* with some stating that there are no damaging groups in their organisation due to the democratic nature of the institutions while others pointing out at some groups that they thought are damaging. Those declining that there are no damaging group claimed that that their institution(s) foster unity and that they are democratic hence each group warrants its respect and respects the welfare of the other members outside the group. They also appreciate the individual freedom to assembly and association within the confines of the law and through respect of other people's freedom and rights.

> *"…….as an individual I'm not aware because again when we…one thing we appreciate that every individual has freedom to assemble and associate with however person, organisation, individuals or groups he feels like so…and interesting enough from this organisation, we have not seen people kind of forming friends or discriminating against others maybe on political grounds, no…"* **(E-N)**

> *"….with regards to groups, no…I don't think people have politically affiliated groups…however individuals may express their political ideas independently as individuals, not as groups…"* **(C-N)**

However, other participants note that there are some small affiliations especially those associated with grapevine form of communication that are formed without any base and start criticizing the functions of the institution. Some that appeared to be of concern as damaging groups include ethnic oriented groups, which the participants note that they have no basis of establishment in an institution that has people from different ethnic groups. One of the respondent terms them as 'tribal' groups which

instead of pushing for national cohesion, they push for cohesion of people from the same tribe. Others as the members note are formed due to a wave affecting the institution and start making unofficial resolutions rather than waiting for the concerned bodies or officials to work on the issue.

> *"...interesting, probably just to give an example which I don't know if it will fit, there was one time there was a group in the organisation, I don't know it was for what, but it had majority of the staff, I don't know what it was for like when it was starting I don't know the reason behind it but it was not official so people kept sharing things and forwarding, you know these forwards on WhatsApp, then one time one of the staff forwarded something that was aahh…"***(B-N)**

**Allegiance in relation to the groups or the organisation and the influence on Organisational Cohesion**

The study found out that individuals within a group have varied ties with some being more affiliated to the organisations while others align themselves to the groups. However, it depends on the nature of the group. In the case of social groups, such groups have no relationship to the firm hence affiliations differ. However, from the study, most individuals hold their affiliation to the organisation as long as the interest of the firm aligns with their personal interests. When grouping come up in a firm, the ties become more to the firm than to the group. Reason being, the firm brings people together and, in the process, they form smaller groups in relation to similar interest or duties performed. The allegiance takes root in the firm then spreads out to the smaller groups to avoid deviation from the main objective of being in the company. To many individuals, smaller groups act as secondary or complimentary to the organisation by guiding them towards achieving company goals. The organisation accommodates all the other smaller groups whose main purpose is to deliver what the employer requires as respondent A-N, B-K and C-N put it;

> *"…it can be both but majorly to the organisation because that is the backbone cause without the organisation the department cannot be there…"*
>> *"…I think the organisation comes first, yes."*
>
> *"…to my organisation…and also the group also, I mean…to my organisation, making sure that we're coexisting very peacefully and achieving our goals as an organisation so if need be, my contribution to any group if it's going to help us achieve our goals then I'm ready and willing to support…"*

Some other members of an organisation have stronger ties to the smaller groupings compared to the firm as an entity. Some believe smaller groups provide an avenue of free communications and airing of issues. Such groups become easier to handle because of their size. Smaller groups provide similar goals that slightly differ from those of the firm. However, their affiliation to the smaller groups aligns with the need to achieve organisational goals as respondent D-K says;

> *"I think an organisation is like an amorphous thing so definitely you'd go for the smaller, smaller groups where communication and you know the relationships, we have with colleagues within that smaller group…"*

An individual's perception, thoughts and feelings influence the kind of allegiance they accord a group and their efforts towards enhancing group cohesion. Organisations should understand the relationship between employee perception about the firm, the impact of such perceptions on communication and the ultimate influence on achieving group cohesion. For example, the participants explained that when one member belongs to more than one group, the member might be focused on the issues of one group over the other. The case is explained in a situation where one member values the tasks of one group over the other despite having the obligations to serve all groups in which he/she is a member of according to the stipulated agreement. Such situations may result to conflict of interest and under-performance for members in a certain

group. However, understanding employee perceptions helps curb such group processes and foster group cohesion.

> *"...that may not be much of an issue, in an organisation where groups are established based on various functions unlike when we have the social groups out there and someone may be feeling like you're more responsive to this one and not this other one, here you'll find that, that is actually dealt with when someone is actually choosing which group to belong to"***(H-K)**

Moreover, the study established that another issue that emerges in groups is the collision of objectives or goals as pursued by different groups with some members belonging to both groups. The respondents noted that people might disagree on time and mode of meeting a given objective as they avoid duplication of what another group is doing with the common target. A case example is in the periodical welfare group where a group can be organising for a 'baby shower' for an expectant mother while another group or *Chama* where the mother belongs to with some of the members of the small group may have common meeting time for planning the baby shower. Therefore, members feel that they will not participate effectively in the two groups that they pay allegiance and loyalty to hence conflict may arise as respondent **B-N** explains.

> *"...well, I don't know which group is that but while on the planning on one of the social groups for the women who are expecting, I remember some members raised issue that this day that you're planning for this activity, it's the same day that we have a chama meeting and in fact the person that you're planning for is also part of the chama so I suggest you change the date. I have seen that in one of the groups in the office so yes there comes some of those moments when someone finds themselves in two events at the same time and then a decision has to be made and..."*

Other issues that the study notes emerging from allegiance to a group include poor turnout of members during meetings and events, social bonding, lack of cohesion,

lack of strict adherence to the constitution and communication breakdown. The issue of poor turnout in events where all members are required to attend affects the operation of the group same as execution of activities and limits the members on ideas aimed at enhancing development of the organisation as stated by the participants. Such low turnout as observed may be due to engagements of members in respect to the timing of the meeting or poor communication on the meetings. Social bonding is another notable issue contributed to by the social class of the group members. Although members may be in the same group with the same agenda, social status arises when the group is inclusive of members from all social class with those from low job group positions feeling discriminated upon. Such may demoralise the functionality of a group as the participants noted;

> *"...it depends with schedules of people because sometimes you may come up with...a group may want to take part in some activities but the turnout may not be that, I mean satisfactory because people are also held up in other activities, yeah...so it depends actually on how one wants to view on the issues of allegiance but what I can say is that sometimes maybe the challenges to allegiance they take place..."* **(C-N)**

> *"...At one point they can arise most probably because of the status of our work. We may find that you have to go to the group every day during lunch hour and sometimes you are needed to attend to a specific duty in the office so you do not have time. You have to concentrate on one area which is more, which is coming first, you prioritise..."* **(H-K)**

Additionally, cohesion of group members is a serious issue that emanates from poor leadership and management of the group to bring together members. The issue also may emanate from diversity of the members such as multi cultures, which may be, add to bond especially when members from one culture feel marginalised due to their minority. The same has close association with members especially the senior in a

group as noted by one of the respondents, fail to adhere to stipulated rules as recorded in the constitution especially in the formal groups. Since many of the formal groups are defined by rules or a constitution, lack of adherence to the constitution creates a misunderstanding. The other serious issue raised by the participants is communication breakdown, which affects most of the informal groups especially when they do not have someone mandated to handle communications or the absence of experienced personnel in that docket.

> *"...the formal communication or the formal way of communicating...you know your allegiance is to your employer because he is the one who pays you the money and actually, you're employed by your employer to the institution so allegiance should be to your employee but these other social groups that we have, they help maybe just for personal..."* **(I-K)**

### 4.2.3 Perceptions on the influence of group communication processes on organisational cohesion

This section presents findings based on my third question which was: What are the perspectives of various groups on the influence of group communication processes on organisational cohesion? In an attempt to answer the above stated question, I sought to establish the different views on how conflicts within the organisation are handled. What mechanisms the organisations put in place to ensure group communication processes enhance organisational cohesion (if any)? This I investigated by looking into some of the existent activities that the groups participate in within the organisations and whether they are of any benefit in terms of promoting cohesion and if there are none, what do the groups think about starting up such activities. I have organized the findings under the following themes:

**Conflicting group communication by organisations**

From the interviews, participants seemed uninformed of any major conflicts within the groups that could be addressed except some of the misunderstandings experienced as discussed in research question two save few who had different observations. Despite the fact that many groups face frequent conflict however small they might be, which eventually grow to bigger conflicts, members were unaware of such conflicts and the response was that through the time they have been members of the groups, they have not experienced any alarming conflicts that could call for action. Others argued that all groups within the organisation, both formal and informal are well connected with the organisation and do not have any risk or vulnerability of being affected by conflict. For the formal groups such as departments and welfare, the respondents observed that they are well grounded to avoid any form of conflict that may occur at any given point.

> *"...rarely can you say that we have serious conflicts within the groups that may affect the institution although they...we have the different groups in an organisation, all of them are working in harmony, they are not working in isolation and whatever they are doing, all is aimed at achieving all one common goal so rarely will you find challenges within the groups that affect the institution as a whole because we don't have..."*

However, one of the participants notes that in case of any conflict the group members converge a meeting where they meet and discuss issues for clarity purposes. Therefore, in order to clarify the issue, the executive finds the right way to relay the true information to all the members concerning the issue.

> *"...When it comes to conflict issues and especially in the institution...normally, the institution has the management group, which normally sits down, and deliberates on those conflict issues that are coming in the institution. How are they are affecting the institute, maybe internally or externally, is it the issue of conflict about our clients, stakeholders, we have to sit down, write a report, analyse the report and then give the feedback, how they are going to handle the issue."*

**Mechanisms of enhancing organisational cohesion through group communication processes**

The respondents noted some of the mechanisms that are in place such as addressing issues that affect groups, proper planning and even representation of religious groups in all events involving communication. Additionally, the organisation ensures that any communication made to groups, is for the benefit of the organisational interest with all members involved rather than serving a private interest. Such measures help prevent conflicts such as gender based, ethnic based or any other form of conflict within a group hence enhancing cohesion. Leaders also take active part in sensitizing members on the importance of vital aspects, which divide members such as different backgrounds, and the importance of communication in areas of diverse people.

> *"I think broadly speaking there are two ways; there is the proactive and the reactive, the proactive ones that as an organisation during the induction for all the employees and stuff, they are taken through on what is expected of them so as you join this organisation, you're supposed to be inducted to know the dos and don'ts, a part of that induction is the letter which you're given which clearly stipulates and then for maybe when you're being introduced and so on and so forth."* **(E-N)**

However, other participants were not aware of any measures that are in place to enhance cohesion. Some of the participants noted that the communication especially for the formal groups is handled by the public relations (PR) department hence they were unaware of any measures which communicators had in place to enhance the unity of the organisation.

According to the study, respondents observed various ways that group processes can be harnessed to help create institutional cohesion. They noted that for example, the organisational mandate is to bring people from all the diversities of life regardless of

their differences, to create a cohesive country. Therefore, the first initiative is to unite the organisation as a group, through uniting the members. Additionally, giving members an equal opportunity where they can all gather information and make presentations hence all members are given equal opportunities to present what they have and they feel as important individuals in the organisation.

Other issues that came out include the presence of counseling department, which helps people with personal issues affecting them either from the informal or formal groups within the organisation. Counseling helps members to realise the importance of accommodating others and understanding their differences in ideologies. There is also the aspect of empowerment that various members in the group can understand the issues to accommodate, tolerate and those to accord importance.

> *"There needs to be empowerment, yeah…on various aspects that…or the diversity in groups so that many understand the issues of tolerance, accommodating others and respect are very much important and people need to be respectful of other people's beliefs and also understanding and should there be criticism then it ought to be constructive..."(C-N)*

Some of the respondents also thought it wise that the administrations of organisations should be understanding of their employees' different backgrounds to help feel more accommodated and appreciated hence fostering organisational cohesion since they would feel as part of the group as a whole as one respondent put it;

> *"For me I think it's very good for us to…personally, for anyone who is in a level position, managerial position to be in tune with the happenings of the day. One; people should be viewed not because of their gender, not because of their tribes, people should be viewed as human beings, that's first. Then number two, as professionals, people who are able to do the tasks they're given or perform the duties they are given. Number three is that any challenge that comes from maybe religion or what should be handled professionally without biasness and people should be heard, you know…for*

*example if according to my religion I need to go for burial and our burials like take a whole week and you're the manager, you should understand this person is not asking for permission to just go home but this is their culture and culture informs our day to day lives so you have to come to that point of realisation, if this is culture then how do I handle this kind of an officer who is requesting for a whole week to go for a burial ceremony, you see…so such things should be playing in your mind as a manager and also constantly there should be meetings between the managers to discuss the day to day happenings, you know…or issues that they are faced with during their day to day running of the business and like you have said communication is dynamic, now…we also have to adopt to what is coming but you use it to influence the society in a better way and also use the information we get and the communication we're using to grow the business" (D-K)*

Despite remarkable efforts by many institutions to put in place rules, regulations and policies with regards to communication and interaction within their organisations, many institutions still have the challenge of keeping up with the interactions that go on within the institutions especially social interactions. One of the things suggested by some of the respondents was the inclusion of issues of group communication processes being mainstreamed into the curriculum so that learners are groomed from an early age to have a diversified worldview therefore a more inclusive perspective. Most importantly, respondents thought that the best way that group communication processes could be best harnessed through communication itself by outlaying rules of engagement however without gagging members of the organisation as they clearly put it;

*"…it's good for institutions again to encourage free interaction but again have some safety measures of resolving should any misunderstanding or conflict arise as a result of that engagement because again we don't want to put many regulations and rules…"(E-N)*

*"I think it would be very, very important to embrace diversity and diversity I mean all the differences that you may find within a group. Like I started, you look at a group and you know there is the gender you know…the gender dimension, age, social class, professional orientation, you know…all those differences have to be harnessed so*

*that you don't in any way make some people feel not part of…and if it's communication then, you must also make sure that you're using all those channels to ensure that everybody is accommodated and they're able to know what is happening for example if you look at the different professional employees in an organisation, you find that for example a driver may not have access to a desktop or a laptop regularly since this is a person who is on transit, movement you know, moving from one place to the other so now when you're choosing now mode of communication, you have to make sure that now you include that driver. How does that driver get to know what is happening, the same way a senior officer gets to know, we have to choose different models or channels by that I mean, you have to look at all those processes, all those differences and embrace the diversity within the organisation so that you don't have differences within the groups. I think that is key, it's critical, very important otherwise you'll find that…a section of the institution may be having this information, another section does not have that information simply because you decided to share that information using one channel…you get. So for example, you find that once in a while you'll want to bring people in a meeting where everybody from the highest to the lowest is in attendance and then you discuss issues, yeah…and then now you know, you're trying to harness the group processes and address all those issues other than thinking that you can do an email and then the issues are resolved, the lady making tea may not have access to an email but maybe when you call for a meeting for everybody, that lady who makes tea will be able to share her thoughts and you feel part of…you've addressed now what that group, that may not get to know what is happening on a daily basis through the emails and the WhatsApp so I think the bottom line is to embrace diversity, the diversity that exists within the groups or within the institution." (D-N)*

When it came to group activities, many respondents were of the idea that they are very critical in the organisation as they enhance cohesion within the organisation. Members get to know one another beyond the office by interacting freely and they break the existing barriers and if activities are held more often, they actually reduce barriers within the offices. It was however quite unfortunate that the organisations did not have as many activities outside the office apart from the annual end-year parties and the occasional breakfast meetings and maybe birthday parties or farewell parties within the offices. Team-building activities were tried however the consistency in such activities is non-existent as one respondent put it;

*"...Activities that bring people who work in the same environment together are very critical, very critical...critical in the sense that it's when you get people in that environment outside of office and you get to engage them in activities that you break barriers and some people who may be having you know...certain challenges or barriers or differences, yeah...get the opportunity to break those instances and you get to know you know those other colleagues that you don't usually get an opportunity to engage with for example you may be in one with a department that you don't engage with...rarely engage with some other sections or people from other sections but when you get to do activities as a group, as an institution outside work environment then it breaks those barriers and it enhances you know...group cohesion, yeah...those are critical, very critical....Hmmm...not really, in terms of team building, not really however there are activities where teams try to bring for example in program implementation, you try to draw staff from different sections of the institution, that is in another way at a lower level trying to build cohesion and integration and group cohesion where you have an accountant, a person from procurement, you have a person from the catering services, yeah....attending a meeting with other staff, that's another way of trying to bring that group cohesion.."(D-N)*

## 4.3 Summary

This chapter presented the findings based on my three research questions, which were: What group communication processes are commonly reported in organisations; how do these group communication processes influence cohesion in organisations; and what are the perceptions on the influence of group communication processes on organisational cohesion? The key findings of the study include the processes of group communication are too wide, intertwined and never ending, the group communication processes can never be fully comprehended, however, organisations insist on the importance of adhering to the constitution and the laid down organisational policies, rules and regulations and finally the importance of consistent group activities beyond the normal office activities to enhance social interaction which in turn enhances acceptance and embracing of diversity therefore leading to organisational and national cohesion at large. In the next chapter, I present the discussion, conclusions and recommendations to the study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present a summary of important issues emerging from the study in relation to the research questions and later show the implications of my study for policy and practice. Finally, I identify the contribution of my study to group communication and later reflect on my experience of the Masters process.

### 5.2 Summary of Key Findings

I set out to answer three main questions, which were: What group communication processes are commonly reported in organisations? How do these group communication processes influence cohesion in organisations? What are the perceptions on the influence of group communication processes on organisational cohesion? Using the multiple case study method and through the use of in-depth interviews, I established the following:

**Table 3: Summary of key findings**

| |
|---|
| **Q1: What group communication processes are commonly reported in organisations?** |
| Groups are formed based on functions of members in the organisation so it's within the formal groups that members further form their own social groups purely based on personal/common interests and some of those groups are sometimes disintegrated after the interests have been served/fulfilled. |
| Some of the interests include religion, ethnicity, family issues etc. basically the groups satisfy any social needs on the job, ideologies, task execution/assignments. |
| **Q2: How do these group communication processes influence cohesion in organisations?** |
| Communication varies dependent on the type of group. Organisations incorporate both down ward and upward patterns of communication and include both verbal and written formats and there is also adoption of social platforms for both formal and informal groups. |
| Due to the many channels of communication, comes with its challenges of miscommunication, distorted or contradicting messages especially with use of social media. |

Use of multiple communication channels has also its advantages since all members receive the information on time and enables instant feedback. Information comes from one point i.e. one person is mandated to pass information to avoid communication from different quarters.

There exist general guidelines on both individual and group communication that members agree to as they join the organisations however the guidelines are mostly specific to official interactions within the organization.

Misunderstandings are inevitable considering the varied dynamics in groups however none have been so grave to warrant loss of jobs or physical fights. Constant and consistent meetings lessen the probability of misunderstandings.

Respondents negated there being any serious group conflicts within the organisations because no group works in total isolation as well as there being multiplicity in group belonging and eventually all groups working towards achieving a common organizational goal.

Issues of allegiance though rare arise when a group member belongs to more than one group and pays more attention to one group neglecting the other or there is collision of objectives or goals as pursued by different groups.

Most participants were not aware of formation of 'damaging' groups however some noted tribal affiliations within the organisations of which they considered them to be a danger. Existence of grapevine though sometimes advantageous was also considered to pose as a danger in terms of being "damaging" groups since there are members whose focus is on grapevine.

There are no specific rules, regulations or guidelines on group formations however most are guided by HR manuals which have general guidelines on associations/interactions within the organisation.

**Q3: What are the perceptions on the influence of group communication processeson organisational cohesion?**

Apart from the introductory induction of new staff, most participants were unaware of any other mechanisms the organizations put in place to enhance organisational cohesion. Some of the staff though the older ones remembered times when the organisations actively put in place such mechanisms such as team building and others though they collapsed with time.

Most participants had similar opinions when it came to embracing group activities and how group communication processes could be harnessed for organisational cohesion. Most spoke of consistency when it came to team building, education days, open forums, counselling sessions etc.

Respondents encouraged mixing up communication channels and patterns within the organisation so that all members in the organisation are catered for and can be heard.

**5.3 Discussion**

Overall, my findings suggest that four key issues emerge out of the aforementioned research questions. These include various types of group communications within

firms; influence of such group communication on organisational cohesion; perceptions within groups on how group communication processes enhance organisational cohesion. Next, I present these issues in the sub-sequent sections respectively.

### 5.3.1 Formation of groups within organisations are a norm

Employees spend a larger section of their day at work interacting with colleagues with diversified characteristics. As adopted in this study, communication is the very essence of a social system. Without communication, there is no existence of any system; conflicts and wars arise (While Adler & Elhhors, 1996). Such interactions often give rise to a void that needs to be filled and that is how most employees within organisations end up forming groups to fill that void. Employees spend less and less time with their family and friends and more time with their co-workers. The more time co-workers spend with each other; they tend to start grouping themselves depending on the common interests and needs that they may have hence formation of groups.

The groups are however not always formed based on interest. Sometimes, they are as a result of being placed in a department within the institution based on expertise or being grouped together for a specific task. This resonates with literature reviewed on group communication where Pearson et al (2003) identify task oriented/secondary and assigned groups as types of groups. True to respondents A-K and B-N's words; the groups are formed for the purpose of completing tasks and evolve out of hierarchy where individuals are appointed as members of groups such as in departments and assignments. One does not get to chose group members based on personal interests.

As many participants put it, sometimes the interests may be temporal hence association would be based on the temporal interests or needs and once the needs have been satisfied, the groups are disintegrated. These needs and interests are well explained by Harris & Sherblom in the "forming phase" of group where diversity and cohesion are included. Communication at this stage becomes tentative where individuals ignore conflicts in an effort to understand each member's purpose of being within the group. However sometimes the groups tend to be more long-term because of shared interests that are more long term such as investments hence formation of more long-term groups. Within these groups, they share events that take place in their personal lives which are beyond the workplace and in this instance, respondent F-N's words resonate to the "storming phase" as discussed in the literature review. In this phase, communication changes to being open. Members engage in honest communication in an effort to foster cohesion within the group. Relating to personal issues with other members which encourages understanding of communication styles of individuals at the time. This in turn improves group communication.

Some participants also mentioned that some of these groups form social media groups such as the common 'WhatsApp' groups hence they rarely meet face to face and some discussions are held online and even conclusions are made online without the physical meetings taking place. Therefore, making social media another very important avenue of social groups formation within the organisations. With the dynamic nature of social groups therefore an individual may end up belonging to more than one group within the same organisation to satisfy the different needs however as long as the groups do not interfere with the main objectives of the organisation. As respondents C-N and E-K put it, groups can go through several metamorphoses. Hence some members classified in one group can also have characteristics belonging to another group.

### 5.3.2 Existence of potentially damaging groups

Information gathered from participants connotes that some social groups formed within organisations prove beneficial to employees. Such groups help members understand each other better, and in return increase cohesiveness in the workplace. Some participants admitted to the fact that there are sometimes formations of groups that could be termed as *'damaging'* in terms of the reasons behind the associations are not so straightforward. The groups are based on grapevine, tribes and general employees who are mostly antagonists to any new ideas brought up in the organisations. They are always trying to bring down the organisations by influencing other employees negatively. This under literature reviewed is a process in group communication termed as 'deviance' which is understood as something bad; such as when someone drops out of a group, rebels against a group or sabotages a group. While such forms of deviance are not always bad, other forms of deviance, such as innovation, are likely to be good; that is innovative deviance can help a group solve problems or adapt to new situations. As stated by John and Turman (2008), "a devil's advocate" in a group can prevent a group from making an unwise, ill-though-out decision. Deviance is a way that group members show their independence or anti-conformity therefore not all forms of 'damaging groups' are actual dangers to the organisation.

### 5.3.3 Structured Organisational guidelines on formation of social groups

The findings suggest that there were no structured organisational guidelines on the formations and operations of social groups within the organisations. Most respondents attributed to the fact that the only guidelines they were aware of are those on the HR manuals given to them during the induction processes of new staff which had guidelines on the general interactions of the staff within the organisation. However,

some participants especially on the management suggested that within the organisation, the information given was never specific because of the dynamic nature of social groups hence it is still a challenge dealing with that entity. This statement resonates with Harris and Sherblom who denote that groups are not static entities. The same way that our personal relationships can go through several turning points, our group memberships are also constantly in flux. We have our more permanent groups but our memberships in others are purely based on interests, needs and wishes which keep changing.

The social groups therefore operate with the full knowledge of the management of the organisations however the managements do not interfere with their activities as long the activities are done outside working hours and do not interfere with the organisations' operations.

### 5.3.4 Mechanisms on harnessing group communication processes to enhance organisational cohesion

Since most employees within the organisations have different personalities and background experiences, they are part of processes of group communication within the organisations. This brings out the question of how then do the organisations harness such dynamism in the organisation to enhance organisational cohesion.

It was my observation from the respondents that the organisations have various set up mechanisms aimed at harnessing group communication processes however some of the critical mechanisms are only theoretical in nature. Most respondents especially those who had worked in the organisations longer remembered of occasions when they would go for team-building activities, regular workshops and other similar activities which would help different levels of employees interact and get to know

each other beyond the official working space hence help improve understanding between employees.

While looking at the literature review, it was noted that groups are formed by individuals of diverse characteristics and one way of observing this diversity in groups is through the communication patterns expressed which are mostly expressed in informal environments such as through activities. It is easy to establish the productivity of people while in groups through group communication. From simple explorations like measuring the force used by one person when pulling a rope to comparing it with when people join hands and through good communication, they are one unit and a united force to pull the rope. It involves figuring out which members are high on influence and which ones gather minimal influence when they speak. People have a social influence on others; individuals in a group, can be significantly influenced by forces that go beyond awareness of the individuals within the groups. The goal of group processes is therefore to counteract the negative aspects of social influence while optimising the positive aspects which is can also prove essential when dealing with 'damaging groups' mentioned above.

Group activities are key in conflict and negotiation which is a process in group communication. Conflicts mostly arise when there are differences in ideologies and interests which can impede the group's ability to achieve a common goal. Activities can create avenues for groups to understand the concept of identity and each other's difference and diversity when it comes to handling disputes and how to better negotiate with others and among themselves when things get difficult. This closely relates to the process of social integration and influence where norms, roles and status are group processes that promote social inclusion by influencing how members behave. They lend order and familiarity to group processes, aiding to make individual

members' behavior's predictable and comfortable for all. Norms, roles and status help groups to avoid excessive conflict and unpredictability, which can, in turn lead to chaos and the disintegration of the group. There has to be a relatively high level of social integration for the groups to function effectively. With all this in mind, it is vital to avoid over-accommodation due to integration.

However, it is also important to note that however the rare nature of such activities, there are some existent activities that the staffs also get to use as an avenue to interact and such activities include fieldwork and regular departmental meetings.

## 5.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine: the types of group communication processes found in organisations; the influence of these group communication processes to organisational cohesion; and the perceptions on the harnessing of group communication processes for organisational cohesion.

Overall, my findings reveal that group communication is a complex subject; therefore, many stakeholders in organisations are still having a difficulty on how to comprehend the dynamism especially with no specific structured guidelines on social group formations and their operations within the organisations in relation to organisational cohesion. Social media is especially not making things any simpler since it makes it both difficult and easy to monitor the kind of communication and interaction that occurs between employees in a given organisation. It makes it easy since with social media, there is always evidence of the communication that took place but it also makes it difficult since new groups keep on being formed on a daily basis and the different social media avenues keep cropping up hence difficult to keep up.

Further, my findings suggest that there is an urgent need for closer understanding of the processes in group communication within organisations and collaboration among communication practitioners and various stakeholders within the organisations to come up with specific guidelines and mechanisms of harnessing group communication processes to enhance organisational cohesion.

### 5.4.1 My Thesis

My thesis is that although communication practitioners continue to carry out numerous research in the quest to understand group communication especially in relation to organisational cohesion, processes in group communication keep changing. Therefore, the diversity in group processes can never be fully explored especially with the advent of social media and the continuous rise of complicated social issues hence achieving complete hundred percent organisational cohesion is a dream if simply put. The communication practitioners in organisations however need to come up with structured guidelines on the formation and operations of social groups within organisations without infringing on the constitutional rights of expression of members. Train members on the processes of group communication as well as encourage group activities in informal set ups which encourage members to engage and embrace with their differences through communication hence working towards achieving organisational cohesion.

### 5.4.2 Contributions of this study

The key contribution of this study is that it highlights the challenges that the managements in organisations face in regards to understanding group communication especially with the ever-increasing dynamism in the age of social media use hence maintaining organisational cohesion a big challenge. This study not only highlights the fact that organisations in this age have to deal with unique communication

processes, but also exposes the complexity of the communication processes in the organisations especially in relation to maintaining organisational cohesion. The challenges exposed are relevant for communication practitioners and policy makers.

Moreover, the study offers a rich source of literature on the subject of group communication in particular and the discipline of organisational communication in general. To my knowledge, and based on the literature I have reviewed on group communication, it is very clear that there is very little documented research on group communication that captures processes of group communication. This does not mean that there are no discourses on group communication; rather, it means that most of the works are on the simple formations and operations of group communication without concentrating on the processes. Therefore, my study will contribute to the ever-expanding field of organisational communication. I envisage that this will add to the literature on group communication processes as well as contribute towards creating a better cohesive environment be it within or without the organisations.

**5.5 Recommendations**

The main aim of this study was to generate empirical data that could shed more light on the communication of group processes for organisational cohesion in two national organisations in Nairobi, Kenya. The findings may also be useful for policy and practice of group communication processes as I describe below:

**5.5.1 Communication groups found within an organisation**

The findings suggest the organisations have often put more emphasis on the general official interactions of employees within the organisation hence less concentration on the social aspect of communication. While it is important to put a lot of emphasis on ensuring the high maintenance of official interaction within the organisation, it is wise

that organisations strike a balance between the social and the official communication strategies. Organisations should appreciate how their employees spend a lot of time in the work environment therefore to fulfill their social needs; they end up forming associations within the organisation that would fill up that void. However, with formation of many groupings because of the many social needs that need to be fulfilled, there is creation of a chaotic environment because there are no guidelines on creation and ways of operation of such groups within the organisation.

### 5.5.2 Influence of the groups to organisational cohesion

The administration in organisations need to be actively involved through the communication departments through active and continuous checking-in on the social groups just to have an idea of what goes on in the organisation. This, they can easily do by using the grapevine positively. This helps to curb and discourage the formation of potentially damaging groups in the organisation. These are the groups that could be used negatively by certain employees to create unrest within the organisation hence creating a hostile working environment. However, the continuous observation should be made in such a way that it doesn't infringe on the space and freedom of the employees and they still feel free within their workplace environment.

### 5.5.3 Perception on different groups pertaining group communication and organisational cohesion

Organisations should utilise services from communication practitioners and organisational stakeholders to come up with permanent mechanisms to be implemented on harnessing group communication processes to enhance organisational cohesion. This is because with dynamism in group communication comes diversified ideologies and competition for individuals to be heard and their ideas taken up over others therefore it is important that there is a way an organisation can collect the

diversified ideologies and putting all of them on the table for possible consideration. Such would encourage all employees and make them feel as part and parcel of the organisation hence the whole organisation works as one unit. For example, the organisations can ensure that within every quarter of a financial year, there are team building exercises that all employees take part in despite their levels. During such exercises, the employees are able to interact beyond the office and their personalities are revealed hence increasing understanding between members therefore creating a more cohesive working environment.

## 5.6 My reflections as a Masters scholar

If I am to be asked, to master is to have comprehension and control and think critically over certain ideologies and I feel like a master in the subject of organisational communication specifically group communication. This experience has truly enabled me to have mastery over my study subject because it is through this project that I have had an opportunity to comprehend the issues, decipher them, reflect upon them, critically challenge them and finally refine and represent them in my own perceptions and understanding. The project has been an extremely transformative experience for me.

Acquiring a Master's degree has been a long-time personal goal and despite the challenges of lecturers strikes, national elections in-between and the covid-19 pandemic which interfered with the smooth flow of the program hence the project taking over three years to complete. I was very blessed to have extremely supportive supervisors, peers and a research course lecturer who keenly guided me through my project.

Generally, I have gained considerable knowledge as the study has brought to my attention dynamic issues surrounding group communication. The study generally was also a great eye opener in my interaction with the qualitative approach of research. I was able to learn and appreciate the deliberate, systematic, critical, trustworthy, ethical and iterative process of qualitative research that seeks to generate worthwhile knowledge. Furthermore, I have become more critical in my approach to general issues in life and I am even enthusiastically looking forward to start my doctoral studies as education is an ongoing process. Therefore, for me, this is just but the beginning as I am eager to learn more as I engage in more research and contribute to the field of organisational communication. This was indeed an enriching and a worthwhile journey.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix I: Research Permit

**Appendix II: Letter from the University**

MOI UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF INFORMATION SCIENCES

Tel. 053-43720, 43620, 43231(Dean)                    P.O. Box 3900, 30100
Fax No. 053-43047,43360                                            Eldoret
Telex No. MOIVERSITY 35047                                      Kenya
Email: deapis@mu.ac.ke, sis.admiin@outlook.com

Our Ref: MU/NRB/SIS/SA/24                    22nd August, 2018

THE SECRETARY/CEO,
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY,
P.O. BOX 30623-00100,
NAIROBI

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: OCHIENG PATIENCE AWUOR – SHRD/PGC/072/16**

The above named person is a bona fide student of Moi University, School of Information Sciences, pursuing a Master of Science degree in Communication Studies.

Ms. Ochieng' has requested for a research permit to allow her collect data for her Thesis entitled: *Management of Group Communication Dynamics for Organization Cohesion: A Study of One National Organization in Kenya.* We support her application.

Any assistance accorded to her will be highly appreciated.

For more information, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

MOI UNIVERSITY
NAIROBI SATELLITE CAMPUS
SCHOOL OF INFORMATION SCIENCES
P.O. Box 63050 – 00200

DR. JARED OBUYA, PhD
COORDINATOR, DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES,
SCHOOL OF INFORMATION SCIENCES.
JO/cro.

**Appendix III: Letter of Introduction**

Moi University,
P.O.Box 3900 – 30100,
Eldoret.

Dear respondent,

I am a graduate student at the school of Information Sciences, Moi University, undertaking an MSc. Communication Studies. As part of the fulfilment of my degree I am required to carry out research. I intend to carry out research on, Processes Group Communication on Organisational Cohesion: A study of two institutions in Nairobi Kenya.

I intend to purposively select 20 participants who include supervisors and a selected number of employees from a few selected departmental offices. You will be requested to voluntarily participate in a one-on-one interview with me in your offices on the agreed dates. All the information you will provide will be kept confidential and will only be used for academic purposes. This study will be important for organisations and all the stakeholders in general since the information given will help in coming up with strategies to enhance group communication leading to organisational cohesion which is vital during the implementation of organisational policies and programs.

Thank you in advance.

Yours sincerely,

**PATIENCE AWUOR OCHIENG'**
Researcher

**Appendix IV: Sample Information Sheet and Consent Form**

**INFORMATION SHEET**

My research is on Processes of Group Communication on Organisational Cohesion: A Study of two institutions in Nairobi, Kenya. I am interested in the perceptions, feelings and ideas in the conversations that go on regarding group communication and how they are embraced for organisational cohesion.  If you participate in this study, it will help to gain more knowledge and understanding which will help the managements and employees of national institutions effectively comprehend processes of group communication to enhance organisational cohesion leading to employee and organisational productivity.

I will collect data through interviews. Any information that you give will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Should you wish to withdraw from the study, you are free to do so at any time.


Ms. Patience Awuor Ochieng'
SCHOOL OF INFORMATION SCIENCES,
MOI UNIVERSITY – KENYA.

**CONSENT FORM**

I consent to participate in this study and it is my understanding that I may withdraw from it at any time.

**NAME:** ................................................................................................................

**ADDRESS:** ........................................................................................................

**SIGNATURE:** ....................................................................................................

**DATE:** ...............................................................................................................

**Appendix V: Sample InterviewGuide**

Kindly introduce yourself and what you do in your organisation

1. What group communication processes are commonly reported in organisations?

   i.   *Kindly inform me about the different types of groups that exist within your organisation?*

   ii.  *Why would you prefer to belong to one group over the other?*

   iii. *What are some of the issues that arise over allegiance to groups in your organisation?*

   iv.  *Are there any institutionally recognised intra or inter -group communication channels, media or patterns, on what criteria?*

   v.   *Are there any existing groups that are potentially "damaging groups?*

   vi.  *In your view, how do the groups communicate internally, with other groups and with the organisation?*

2. How do these group communication processes influence cohesion in organisations?

   i.   *What are some of the communication channels, patterns and media that groups use among each other in your organisation? With other groups?*

   ii.  *How does the organisational management manage these channels for organisational cohesion?*

   iii. *What are the existing misunderstandings in the groups that you belong to? Any that are previous?*

   iv.  *How are such issues handled within your organisation?*

   v.   *What ties are stronger, to your group or to the organisation? What about your colleagues generally? Are you able to say some circumstances when their ties are to their groups more than to the organisation?*

   *vi.*  *What organisational guidelines are there on groupings and group membership? Are they documented or not? Does the organisation identify healthy and unhealthy communication within or between groups – how? Can you remember and mention some group communication you could consider unhealthy?*

3. What are the perceptions on the influence of group communication processeson organisational cohesion?

   *1.*  *How does the organisation handle conflicting group communication in terms of allegiance to the groups and institution?*

   *2.*  *What mechanism does the organisation put in place to ensure group communication dynamics enhance organisational cohesion (if any)?*

   *3.*  *What is your opinion on how group communication processes can be harnessed to enhance organisational cohesion?*

   *4.*  *What is your opinion about group activities within the organisation? If there are, are they of any benefit in terms of promoting cohesion? If not, what do the groups think about starting up such activities?*

   *5.*  *At this point…is there any information that you feel like you could share about group communication in general in your organisation?*

*Unless you have any questions or comments, we have come to the end of the interview.*

*Thank you so much for time.*

**Appendix VI: Sample of Interview**

**INTERVIEW WITH E–K**

**What group communication processes are commonly reported in organisations?**

i. *Kindly inform me about the different types of groups that exist within your organisation?*

Okay, K first and foremost is a government organization with is a specific obligation to ensure that the Education set up in the country and all those that undergo any form of education training and subsequent development of human resource is well…given environment where they can be able to be developed and they can be able to thrive to supply the relevant demand by the government to be able to manage the social and social welfare of the government to its citizens and therefore it must be able to encourage the well-being of Kenyans and for that matter we play a very big role in molding…that mind of that lady or of that gentleman who will eventually become a Kenyan who can be able to identify with being a Kenyan and then for…first and foremost we are the bigger group of Kenyans, yeah…we in K we're another special group that is given the specific task of ensuring that we do what…we put in place the measures that the government wants to achieve with the objective of being able to develop a nation for tomorrow that can be able to become something else and therefore…something better for the development of the nation.

Now…in K, other than the family of K, we also have sub-groups within K dictated by the nature of service that you offer. We have the media department that specifically deals with curriculum support material, ours is to mainly support what the curriculum developers do, yes…and we support it in line the dictates of the curriculum, at that point then it means that we in the media, those especially dealing with development of

media of those curriculum must be able to understand the concept and ideas that comes with the curriculum developers, look at them from the perspective of the media, regenerate programmes that would enhance the work of curriculum developers in delivering of the curriculum by the teachers in schools and for that matter we have the broadcast…aaaaa, that is a sub-group. We also have other sub-groups of people who are specific…with specific tasks in the institution, we have those who deal with the curriculum, there's a sub-group that we interrelate and communicate with one another for the purposes of achieving the ultimate objective of the institute. K as it is having a…I think 3 departments…media, we have the curriculum…CRS, then we have the administrative wing of K working together towards the ultimate common goal.

Other than the official demarcation within the groupings within the organization, we also have groups that have been formed for purposes of development of the welfare of the staff as dictated by the staff through the challenges they have been able to go through and therefore they have been able to come up with specific organizations that help them in aaah…sorting out challenges that may arise in the process. Now, the two groupings that I can talk about, one is corporative movement which was formed by the staff of K to enhance the socio-economic welfare of their challenges and therefore it's a sacco that receives resources from the members and gives back to members in forms of loans which they can be able to pay back at a small interest...uuum, and that way they are able to build themselves. The sacco has gone out of its way and developed to the point that it gave birth to another corporative that is the housing corporative which is also on-going; it's also taking care of the socio-economic welfare of the staff. The only difference between the corporative and the sacco is that the sacco gives loans and the corporative deals with acquisition of land and other

investments that are…other than liquid cash; loans and credits are managed. Apart from that also, the staff also went out of its way and formed another group that is the K staff welfare. The K staff welfare is also another organization that takes care of members in terms of…in times of bereavement. Briefly, those are the groupings that I can be able to mention now.

### *What of "informal groups"*

Hehehe…those ones are very much there, you even find the kind of 'chamas' within the organization that they're quite informal to the point that leave alone the main organization knowing it that they exist, you'll find that out of even the same department here, there could be interactivity amongst staff in an organizational manner that even those of us within the same department or even the same unit, may not know, so those are…they are there…in fact you can't even tell on whether they are good, some are even, the bad one are even or not, some of them are there and you don't know until something happens…yes. Incidentally I happen to be the chair of the sacco, then fortunately I also happen to be the chair of the staff welfare and that by fact actually does not give me room to belong to the lower levels of some of those groups and also I know maybe it's the way some of my colleagues may be looking at me so they don't want to engage me in these other ones maybe…they think "*achaakaenahiyoyakehuko*" yeah…otherwise I know they exist at some point or another maybe I was belonging to one or two but sometimes you know they fizzle out…because you see some of them are quite informal that even the small rules put together at some point I feel like aaah no, cause you know there's nobody…there's no supervisory mechanism to supervise even the rules you put in place, that also becomes a challenge, you may even start something together and decide you go you move one month, two months…the third month you find it disintegrating, such like things. They

are always temporary depending on current interests, in fact some people could even be joining them with other ulterior motives that until now you get into other activities is when you realize that okay…here there are things and actually that informs quite some of them breakdown and deteriorate to that point…yeah.

### ii.    *Why would you prefer to belong to one group over the other?*

Uuum…you know in most cases human beings are derived into specific activities by either the challenges they come across in life or other objectives that they may develop that may inform their reasoning to the point that they feel they need to achieve an ultimate objective which they feel they would otherwise not be able to achieve individually so basically for me to have decided to become a member of the sacco, I needed my socio-economic welfare to be improved in times of need and it should not be forgotten that in our current environment, even in the fast-world, there are very few people who live from the resources that they've made, most people live on credit, you don't have, you go, you borrow, you come…you utilize it, you pay back and you're left with something to continue tomorrow so basically our economic status save for those few rich group, the group you can call rich, those are the people who can decide to do things on their own without…but they also need help because even if you're rich, it doesn't matter how rich you are, if those resources are not multiplied, surely those riches must come to an end…so you realize that even for the rich, they still rely on the bigger population, to help them generate the resources that they have, actually they take advantage of the population that is not well off to continuously…and therefore most of these groups, for me to have decided either to join the staff welfare, or the sacco it was informed by some of those challenges that we come across, of course uuuum…you can argue let's say you still have both your parents and even your grandparents, you can argue that maybe you think you have

enough but wait until maybe you have lost one of them, you'd realize that it doesn't matter how rich you are, you'll still need people to come together to help you in one way or another either through resources or by empathizing with you, yeah…because even emotional deficiency at that time can lead to so many other factors and therefore nobody I think is an island and if you decide to be an island, your success can be very minimal…yes, so I think the issue of interactivity, socializing and man is a social animal…if you just woke up in the morning and you stayed there, you are not doing anything, not talking to anybody, nobody is talking to you, you're just there, you stay like that for about three days, the few who might have the opportunity to see you or observe you, they'll say so and so is mad so naturally human beings are social animal…yeah.

*iii. What are some of the issues that arise over allegiance to groups in your organisation?*

You realize that all groups including this country and even…our country currently is guided by the rule of law through the constitution…you come to K, is a government entity, it has specific obligations that it must be able to meet. The government has also what we call code of regulations, COR…which helps government entities or organizations to live and interact with both the staff and external organizations in a particular way, there's that clear guideline, without that then things would be a mess so similarly our small organizations that we have within the compound save for the corporative movement, the corporative movement has the governments corporative act as guided by the ministry of industrialization and…trade and industrialization where the department of corporative is…in the previous years, corporative used to be a ministry, standing alone hence the need for the management infrastructure within the government to make sure that they oversee the running of the sacco movements up

to date. You come to the smaller organizations like the welfare I mentioned, they also have a constitution and it's registered, it's for the good and the objective of that organization that all these documents are registered by the government and they dictate what the organizations do and how they go about their day to day as stipulated in that constitution.

*iv.* ***Are there any institutionally recognised intra or inter -group communication channels, media or patterns, on what criteria?***

Yeah…K has…we have a unit called the corporate…the corporate department under the office of the director which communicate to the staff within K either via email, through our email addresses or via our phones through the official WhatsApp group that has been formed by the organization and many others like conventional means, occasionally there is communication that is done to you directly via mail of course of late we're seeing an introduction of a new digital platform where all these things are being converged into the digital platform, it's a process that's ongoing but I think eventually we'll end up there.

*v.* ***Are there any existing groups that are potentially "damaging groups?***

Huuuh…yes those are groups that anywhere where human beings are, you'll not fail to see those kinds of groupings because we have varied feelings, we have various ways of looking at each other and that by extension dictates the people we interact with. Such like groups are bound to come up where any groupings of human beings together just like when we were in school…yeah…those groups are bound to be there in any groupings of human beings just because of our preferences and our maybe background. There are those who would like to stay in a quiet or in an orderly speaking to one another in a given manner and then there those who in that of an kind of environment, they are making observations and making jokes and all those kinds of

things and then there are those who will be looking at the negative aspects and deciding that, that is their best…actually that is what they are best at amplifying…so those kinds of groups are bound to be there, there is even like and dislike among groups, yeah…within the same community but then we form those kinds of groups that does not see eye to eye with the other, yeah…all those things have a direct, they are all direct traits that human beings hold…you can rule them out and hence the need for the kind of rules that are normally created at the beginning to help you manage such like instances where people come up with…or members of a community come up with damaging ways of doing things or taking advantage of others or either…or even hurting others, yeah…so the rules are supposed to be able to create a level ground to allow that kind of acceptable interactivity across the board…yes.

vi. *In your view, how do the groups communicate internally, with other groups and with the organisation?*

mmm…if I start with the two that I've talked about, the ones that I take control over…first and foremost the fact that they are formal, the two that I handle are formal and the parent organization, K knows that they exist, they play a specific role that enhances the productivity of the staff to the institute. That means that any times there is need for interaction between my organization and…the two organizations that I guide with any outside organization and depending on whether it's official hours or office hours or utilization of facilities within the institute…there's always formal communication to the CEO informing him of what we're intending to do and of what interests it is to that organization and occasionally…not occasionally, we've always been given a go ahead, yeah…we've never had a time when we've been given a negative response to our requests and really gives credit to the K administration for so many years…in fact even some of the facilities that we make use of if they are not

involving liquid needs, is always given to us without much overdo and with that surely the credit goes back to the K administration for creating that enabling environment for helping us able to sustain the needs of the K staff.

4. **How do these group communication processes influence cohesion in an organisation?**

   *i. How does the organisational management manage these channels for organisational cohesion?*

   I think the institution has managed to do that because most of…not most, all of our communication channels come from the right quarters like you cannot, if you're an outsider, if you had not been introduced by somebody whom I know, you cannot come here and start asking me questions about K without first and foremost you introducing yourself, putting across your objective and I should be able to analyse and evaluate that to decide on whether I'm the right person or not of which most of the time we do. You'll come to me and you'll just explain to me exactly what you want, I'll guide you to the right person that is for an outsider but for within amongst us here, we know specific obligations that each and every one of us hold…yeah, if let's say you're a customer from outside there, a teacher, you come and you want curriculum support material like the ones I handle in this office, if you come to me, yes I may have it but you'll not pick it from me, we have the official channel through which you're supposed to get it, you'll go to the bookshop, you'll pay up, the bookshop will take your order, your order will be brought to the back office, it will get to me, I'll do the necessary, I'll create it, record it, pass it over to the bookshop and then you'll pick it over from there so that orderliness within the organization is part and parcel of what is making our communication traits succeed.

*ii.* ***What are the existing misunderstandings in the groups that you belong to? Any that are previous?***

Misunderstandings normally come when group members expectations are either not achieved or some of them have been trodden on or there has been lack of information as to how certain things are supposed to be done by the group members and therefore, they ask for unrealistic…they come up with unrealistic demands such like circumstances are always bound to be there but how do we manage them…

*iii.* ***How are such issues handled within your organisation?***

Through creating education days…days where people you can be able to interact with one another, understand what the objective of that grouping is, what are our achievement as at now and what is our roadmap to the next place, what kind of work-plan do we have or a strategic plan do we have, where do we want to be tomorrow, once such like things have clearly been shared amongst the groups, then the lack of understanding within the groups minimizes so education is an aspect that is quite important, continuous communication when there are certain specific issues arise through the various modes of communication available are there like for the sacco, the sacco currently is having members who are not employees of K and we have to make sure that the way we serve our members within the common bond, we're also giving the relevant service so the sacco has come up with a website, we have a WhatsApp platform, we have their emails, we have their phone numbers so when there are such like requirement to broadcast information, we use all those avenues. We format them to fit all those platforms…yeah.

*iv. What ties are stronger, to your group or to the organisation? What about your colleagues generally? Are you able to say some circumstances when their ties are to their groups more than to the organisation?*

I think I'm more attached to the organization because the moment I transform my allegiance from the organization to these other groups, then I'll not be able to deliver here. If I'm unable to deliver here and I'm shown the door, will I still remain a member of these sub-groups? So my objective must be very clear, my employer gets my attention first, these other ones comes second, these other ones are supposed to help manage the staffs needs to the point that they don't get deviated from their main objective of the employer. So even as K gives us some of those facilities as the sacco, as the welfare to utilize, it is when understanding that, we're building the well-being of the staff to remain focused with employer's requirements.

Actually, that's where I talked about education. When we have education days where either the sacco or the welfare or these other small groups that you may have, you can only have those small meetings outside official hours, you cannot have those meetings during office hours…office hours we expect delivery of services and this being a public delivery service, you cannot create a meeting that is not of direct need of the organization during official hours, you cannot do that, even for the sacco, as much as we run them and provide a few services within…during office hours, it has enabled us…it has forced us to hire its own staff, the sacco has its own staff within the compound who are allowed to work within the compound by the institute just to give those services, the small, small services that would otherwise require the attention of the staff so through education we're normally able to induct one another and remind one another that we're of this because we're members of K so even if there could be one or two or a few who might come up with that kind of a tendency with time they'll

realize there's need to do the right thing as pertains the needs by your employer and only do those other things that you'd like to do like that at your own time either during lunch hour or after five…yes.

*iv. What organisational guidelines are there on groupings and group membership? Are they documented or not? Does the organisation identify healthy and unhealthy communication within or between groups – how? Can you remember and mention some group communication you could consider unhealthy?*

Hmmm…not one that I have seen…yeah but officially they recognize that these two entities are there…yes but on any kind of a guideline, I have not seen it addressed.

Okay…let me just ask you a very simple question, just look at what we have in the mainstream government, a sacco like harambee sacco, is there anywhere where it's talked about within the government ministries or government departments...it is not and yet is a big facility, for your information, all ministries in this country have very big saccos employing and managing billions of shillings. The government remits from the staff to those Saccos and yet it is nowhere but it is somewhere because we have a ministry and a department of corporatives which is recognized so through that we're recognized here so we don't need a local recognition. If the mainstream government has given us recognition and has given us a ministry at some point, we even have ministers even now I think we have a CS, that's recognition enough that we exist though not documented at the lower level but higher level it is and I think that is that.

I think all government organizations domesticate what we call the COR, code of regulations, and the COR actually takes us across all those areas you're talking about. They're all covered, anchored also on the law and the constitution because at the end of the day all these we're talking about are by human nature, they're just human and therefore you cannot wish them away and that is why they are being addressed and

anywhere where human beings are interacting…the issue of the law which is the constitution becomes mandatory so once you have them and that's why even for the welfare or for the sacco, the sacco is registered through the ministry of corporatives, the welfare is registered at the registrar's…attorney general. That's already recognition enough that there is an element of regulation by the government so whatever happens at this low level like K being a department of the ministry cannot start making that its core business, it has a core business that it needs to concentrate on…departments of the mainstream government, let that department deal with it.

First and foremost you need to understand that as long as you're a representative of any group you must be level minded but there are certain instances where there would be rise of lack of understanding between two groups to the point that maybe even the staff can get to a point whereby they nominate even they elect somebody who not even the capacity of leveling things especially when it comes to negotiation or making formal requests that are not right but they are just privileges because like even  now, the fact that K houses the welfare and sacco here, it is a privilege that the institution gives that mandate otherwise if they were to decide otherwise they can become radical and say no, it's not our core business and therefore we don't need it here , can you take it out there whatever you do with it out there is not our business so there's that need of members being able to identify true leaders who can be able to guide them in circumstances of misunderstanding with their parent organization.

5. **What are the perspectives of various groups on how group communication processes can be harnessed to enhance organisational cohesion?**

i. *What mechanism does the organisation put in place to ensure group communication processes enhance organisational cohesion (if any)?*

Hehe…that makes me reflect back to…we constantly do what we call staff appraisal every end of the financial year and some of the small, small things that are addressed in that appraisal document touches on all those things you're talking about…yeah, respect for gender, respect for national diversity, respect…integrity, cohesion and how are you able to interact with…all those things, small elements of communication that are required in an organization because an organization like K deals with education, serves the whole country so if you get somebody from northeastern, you get somebody from mpeketoni, you get another one from migingo, get another one from lodwar, lake Victoria…all these people you should be able to understand where they are coming from when you're providing those services and therefore the need for respect for diversity. All those are tenets that are always looked at the end of every financial year but I think we've been able to cohesively build it, I'm yet to hear when somebody would say that I've come from northeastern and I've not been served on the basis of where I'm coming from or from central or from Nyanza.

ii.   *What is your opinion on how group communication processes can be harnessed to enhance organisational cohesion?*

Yeah…these dynamics can be harnessed through mainstreaming them in the curriculum because since we're doing the curriculum for the whole country if we're able to mainstream some of these aspects into the curriculum, I believe that one has to come up growing understanding that this is a trait that will enhance my better tomorrow irrespective of where I will be in this country.

*iii.* ***What is your opinion about group activities within the organisation? If there are, are they of any benefit in terms of promoting cohesion? If not, what do the groups think about starting up such activities?***

Of course, at some point K normally gives us what we call education week where they bring in resource persons from out, they identify…the education committee identify or the training committee identifies areas that they feel we need to be empowered in and they call those resource persons and during that education week all of us are supposed to attend. Yeah…so I think that being one of them, education week being one of them, other days that we normally hold, maybe if the director has certain information that he wants to communicate to us, not through…all the other forums, he calls us in a meeting, gives us two hours guidance on what he wants us to understand and that's it, other than that also, I think in the other…yeah, we normally have at least a meeting with the director just before Christmas, at least every year.

They are very important, you get to understand your colleagues, you get to understand your bosses, your bosses get to understand you, sometimes they also bring those people who help you dance, "*mnachezahapo*' yeah…there are those who now everything is not the way you're used to seeing it…that's it. I think it's important to enhance that interactivity and perceptions…yes.

*iv.* ***At this point…is there any information that you feel like you could share about group communication in general in your organisation?***

I think group communication…I would only request all of us to be…to respect each other because if I appreciate you in whatever form you come, I would be able to understand you better but if I'm judgmental from the first instance you may be talking to me but since I'd judged you, whatever you may be saying I cannot hear and yet that talking would break the ice in certain areas that I would not have been able to

understand you from. So, let's not take each other for granted, let's appreciate each other and let's give each other an opportunity to interact with…even if we don't agree with what they want, let's share it, let's listen and share with them that we don't agree with them because of abcd.

**Appendix VII: Budget**

| CORE ACTIVITIES | ITEMS/PURPOSE | COST (KSHS) |
|---|---|---|
| Consolidation of literature for review | Books, journals, internet sources and other written documents | Approx. 20,000 |
| Designing and developing research instruments and production of proposal drafts and final report drafts | Reams of photocopy papers (approx. 10 pcs) | 10,000 |
| Main field data collection | Transport to and from the institutions in Nairobi, Kenya | Approx. 10,000 |
| Data processing, analysis and report writing | Purchase of Foolscaps and reams of photocopy papers (approx.5 pcs) | 5,000 |
| Miscellaneous | - | Approx. 10,000 |
| **TOTAL** | **KSHS. 55, 000.** | |

**Appendix VIII: Work Plan**

I conducted the study following the timeline shown below:

| MONTH | ACTIVITY |
|---|---|
| MARCH – MAY '18 | Preliminary proposal writing |
| JUNE '18 | Preparation of research instruments |
| JUNE - JULY '18 | Compilation of proposal |
| JULY '18 | Consultation with supervisors |
| AUGUST '18 | Proposal presentation and collection of research permit |
| SEPT - DEC '18 | Data generation |
| JAN –DEC '19 | Transcription of interviews and document analysis |
| JAN '20 - AUG '21 | Analysis and Compilation |
| AUG '21 –JUNE 23' | Submission of final draft. Seminar presentation; corrections from the seminar Final thesis defense; corrections from the defense |
| DEC'23 | Graduation |