

# Risk Management in Pre- Production of Film Projects

A study on key risk management factors during  
the pre-production phase in film projects

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## Abstract

This paper explores the role of risk management during the pre-production phase of film projects. The purpose is to find the key risk management factors in film production and find which actions top management takes in the pre-production phase to mitigate these. To address this, the following research questions are used:

(1) What are the key risks associated with film projects, and what actions are taken by top management to mitigate these?

Followed by our sub-questions of, (2) How are risks identified in the pre-production of film projects? (3) How does communication and stakeholder engagement contribute to risk mitigation in film projects? (4) Which are the most common and recommended risk mitigation strategies?

The central problem addressed in this paper is the lack of a comprehensive understanding of how risk management practices can contribute to mitigating risks in film projects. To explore this issue, we use a qualitative research methodology, including semi-structured interviews with five top management professionals in the film industry. The interviews aimed at gathering in-depth insights into their experiences and practices related to risk management during the pre-production phase. The data collected was analyzed using thematic analysis. Our research identified key risks in film projects and what methods top management uses to identify these risks in pre-production. Furthermore, we present how communication and stakeholder management contribute to risk management in pre-production. Lastly, we provide the most common risk mitigation strategies applied in the film industry. Our findings offer practical recommendations for professionals in the film industry and for up-and-coming producers and directors who want ground pillars to stand on when starting a film project. Furthermore, our findings contribute to the existing risk management literature by focusing on a not-so-well-studied subject, namely risk management, in the film's pre-production phase.

**Keywords:** Risk Management, Pre-Production, Film Projects, Stakeholder Engagement, Communication, Risk Identification, Risk Mitigation

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# 1. Introduction

The introduction will consist of three sections. The background will introduce a deeper understanding of our research. Included in this will be “Determining Film is a Project” and a “Risk Management” background. These will allow for a better understanding of the focus of our research. Next, we will provide the reader with the aim and purpose of our thesis. Lastly, in our introduction, we present our research question and sub-questions.

## 1.1 Background

The film industry is a giant business that is constantly changing; therefore, it relies heavily on project management in order to bring creative visions to life. Making a movie requires coordinating the efforts and talents of hundreds of project workers from a variety of backgrounds (Jones, 1996, p.60) With the industry containing many stakeholders, strict deadlines, and ethical investments, it is a complex and highly competitive field. Film production projects frequently must deal with several dangers that might affect their profitability and financial sustainability, no matter their appeal of creative expression. In order to prevent risks and ensure project success, required is effective risk management at every stage of the project lifecycle, including the pre-production phase. Risk elements are present in all types of productions, recorded (e.g., series, movies, soap operas, etc.) or live (plays, shows). These risks are often aggravated by the cast and crew members, by putting the production ahead of their own safety, as revealed by the sayings “getting the shot is what counts” and “the show must go on” (Bento, 1994, p. 35). They often become so involved in the “business of illusion” that they forget reality (Campbell and Mccann, 1987; Mccann, 1991). Taking precautions in the film’s pre-production phase can lead to better safety measures and a more successful film. This thesis paper is intended to analyze how managing risks during the pre-production phase of film production projects contributes to risk mitigation through communication and stakeholder engagement.

### 1.1.1 Determining Film is a Project

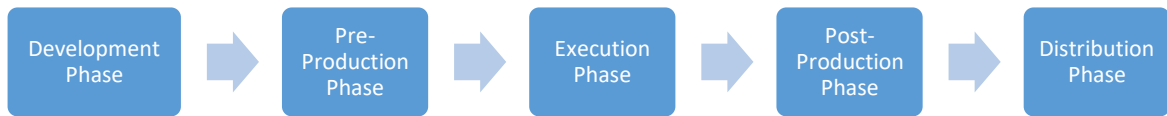
A project is a work form that uses a temporary organization to help deliver a predetermined result at a given time. One way to think of a project is as a process with a start and an end (Tonnquist, 2018, p. 27). That said, film production can be defined as a project. During a film project, a temporary organization is brought together to bring a creative vision to life. It is also a project that contains a beginning and an end. The beginning of a film project is an idea that is meant to be brought to life. For example, many books are being turned into film. The ending of a film project is when the production is released to the public. To prove the organization is temporary, many of the people who were a part of the team on a specific project move on to participate in other production projects once the production has come to

a clear end. “The film industry is one of the best examples today of a project-based industry. If there is a business where participants can be said to live and die by projects, then filmmaking is that business” (Finney, 2008). Every project in the film industry is a mix of business and creativity that needs to be carefully planned and carried out. Filmmaking is a perfect example of a project-based business, where success depends as much on creative vision as it does on effective project management.

Tonnquist (2018) defines a project’s lifecycle as consisting of four phases. The pre-study, planning, execution, and closure. The pre-study phase aims to reduce uncertainty by looking at the fundamentals for carrying out the project (Tonnquist, 2018, p. 29). In film projects, this is the development phase. The development phase of a film is where the initial idea takes shape and starts to become a real project. This is when the script gets written and the main creative elements like the story, characters, and visual style are decided. It’s a key time for getting funding, bringing together the creative team, and figuring out how the production will work. The planning phase is choosing a realization strategy and creating a plan for the project’s execution. It is necessary to define, estimate, and organize activities; it is also necessary to arrange resources, estimate expenses, and make sure risks are managed (Tonnquist, 2018, p. 29). During movie projects, this is pre-production. The pre-production phase of a film is when all the planning happens before the shooting officially begins. This is the time to finalize the script, scout locations, hire the cast and crew, and plan the shooting schedule. It’s a crucial phase for getting everything ready so that production can run smoothly later. In projects according to Tonnquist (2018, p.319), The results are produced and provided during the execution. A project must be successfully completed by regularly monitoring results, comparing them to the plan, identifying discrepancies, and making adjustments. The execution phase during a film project is the production and post-production phase. In the production phase, filming takes place according to the plan, bringing the script and creative vision to life. It’s a busy time with the cast and crew working together to capture the best scenes. After filming wraps up, the post-production phase begins. This is where the footage is edited, sound is added, visual effects are incorporated, and the final touches are made to complete the film. After the execution phase then comes the closure phase, the ending phase of a project. During this phase, the purpose is to assess the project, apply the lessons learned, and phase out the project team (Tonnquist, 2018, p. 29). Once the project is complete, the project workers phase out to different projects. This is the exact case in film as well. “The film industry’s network organization is constantly being created and re-created. Firms and subcontractors combine for a specific project, disband when the project is finished, and then combine for new projects- often with differing participants” (Jones, 1996, p.6). Then comes the distribution of the movie to their audience. When the film is released to be played at theaters, YouTube, short-film festivals, etc.



**Figure 1.** *The Project Lifecycle Model demonstrating the phases of a project (Based on Tonnquist, 2018, p. 29)*



**Figure 2.** *The Project Lifecycle Model demonstrating the phases of a project during a Film Production Project (Murry, 2024)*

Above are two figures shown to demonstrate the comparison between a project lifecycle and the lifecycle of a film production. As seen in the models, they are very similar proving how a film project is to be considered a project. These models highlight the shared fundamental phases that are in both processes. All projects have a set sequence of steps needed to complete the project effectively, from planning and initiation (pre-study and development phase, from the model above) all the way through execution, monitoring, and (closure and distribution phase). By emphasizing these parallels, the practical use of project management principles in the film industry is shown. Filmmaking involves many of the same critical tasks as other types of projects, including stakeholder involvement, risk management, resource management, and planning. Understanding this can allow us to apply project management techniques to improve the movie-making process.

Throughout our thesis, we have chosen to examine managing risks during the pre-production phase of a film project. Films carry uncertainty, thus preparing for risk in pre-production can be essential to the project's success (Ribera & Sieber, 2009). The pre-production phase is also the phase for planning for risks. “There is a difference between what is supposed to happen in effective project management in the film industry, and what often happens in reality” (Finney, 2008). We will analyze how managing risks during the pre-production phase of film production projects contributes to risk mitigation through communication and stakeholder engagement.

### 1.1.2 Risk Management

Tonnquist (2018, p.231) defines risk management as consisting of risk identification, qualitative and quantitative risk analysis, risk response planning, and risk mitigation. A risk is a situation where something uncertain might happen, and because of that, it’s difficult to know exactly what will occur, when it will happen, and what the consequences will be. To



differentiate risks from uncertainties, uncertainties relate to events that are already known and have different outcomes depending on internal as well as external circumstances.

The idea of risk identification forms the basis of Tonnquist's approach to risk management. This consists of carefully assessing possible risks and uncertainties that could affect the goals, schedule, finances, and quality of a project. Early in the project lifecycle, project teams may identify all relevant risks and create strategies and backup plans to deal with any obstacles and minimize their impact on the project (Tonnquist, 2018, p.232).

After identifying the risks, Tonnquist (2018) highlights the significance of risk assessment. In order to prioritize the risks according to their possible outcomes, this stage involves evaluating the effect and likelihood of the detected risks. By putting the most important and significant risks first, project teams may concentrate their attention and resources, making sure that mitigation efforts are focused and successful (Tonnquist, 2018, p.234). This is shown with methods like the mini and maxi-risk methods.

Risk mitigation is the next stage that is discussed after risks have been evaluated and prioritized. This entails creating and putting into action plans to lessen the possibility or effect of risks that have been recognized. Implementing protective steps, creating backup plans, assigning more resources, or modifying project plans to account for unforeseen circumstances are examples of effective risk mitigation techniques (Tonnquist, 2018, p.238).

Successful risk management is not just about reducing threats to project performance. A key motivation in effective risk management is finding opportunities to change basic plans and come up with backup strategies. This strategy ensures that the amount of risk taken is carefully aligned with the target of maximizing long-term business success. In order to fully reap the benefits of cultural changes and prevent dysfunctional organizational behavior linked to unclear goals, expectations, commitments, provisions, and contingency sources, risk measurement can be an essential instrument in this process (Chapman, 2003, p.54). Tonnquist's risk management framework shows that being prepared and organized about potential problems in projects is important. By identifying, assessing, and planning for risks, businesses will not only avoid problems but also find new growth opportunities. Chapman (2003, p.54) also mentions that looking at risks smartly can help companies change their culture and make clearer goals. By including risk management in projects, businesses can do better in the long run and be more flexible and resilient. Throughout our thesis, our research will aim to investigate the methods, techniques, and tactics used in risk management throughout the pre-production phase of film productions

and close this research gap. This will also contribute to knowledge in project management in the creative industries.

### *1.2 Problem Statement*

The issue that leads to the purpose of our research is a lack of thorough knowledge about how risk management practices during the pre-study phase contribute to risk mitigation. While previous research often acknowledged that efficient risk management is crucial for project success, not enough has been researched on how precise techniques and approaches for locating, assessing, and mitigating risks in the pre-study phase of film production have been conducted. We are conducting this research because the financial and artistic results of film projects may be negatively impacted by this research gap, which could also result in greater project uncertainty, delays, and budget overruns. This could greatly affect the entertainment industry.

The objective of this research is to offer practical insights and suggestions for people working in the film industry and stakeholders who want to enhance risk management procedures during pre-production. This is done by researching the function of risk management practices, approaches, and strategies in reducing project risks during this crucial project management stage. Identifying problem areas and proposing solutions, can lead to positive change and contribute to growth and development in the film industry. With an annual income of billions, the film industry is a very significant and powerful part of the entertainment industry. Aspiring filmmakers, business professionals, and stakeholders need to comprehend project management techniques in this field to effectively deal with all aspects of film production.

### *1.3 Purpose and Research Questions*

The purpose of this thesis is to find the key risk management factors in film production and come up with actions top management can take in the pre-production phase to mitigate these.

Research Question:

- *What are the key risks associated with film projects, and what action is taken by top management to mitigate these?*

Sub-questions:

- *How are risks identified in the pre-production of film projects?*
- *How does communication and stakeholder engagement contribute to risk mitigation in film projects?*
- *Which are the most common and recommended risk mitigation strategies?*

## 2. Theoretical Frame of Reference

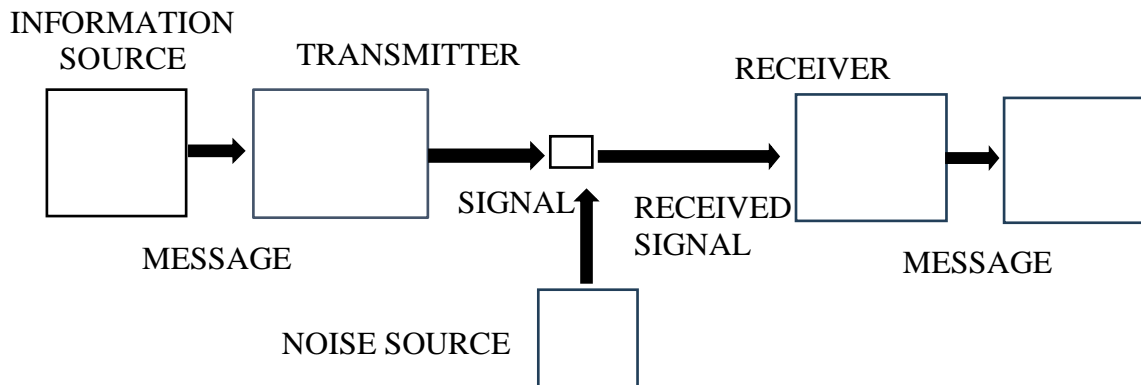
In the theoretical framework, we present different aspects of risk management. We will use the theory of risk management as a framework to help us analyze risk management in film projects. As well, we will also discuss the communication and stakeholder theories. With the help of the literature, we will be able to analyze our empirical data with recognized risk management theory, this will give our thesis depth and our arguments will be grounded in solid knowledge in the field of risk management.

### 2.1 Theories

Throughout our theories section, we will defend the communication theory and stakeholder theory. Using the communication theory in our research provides a lens for us to understand how information about risks is shared, received, and understood within projects. It allows us to see how stakeholders' attitudes and behavior about risk management might be impacted by good communication. As far as using the stakeholder theory, we will use this to focus on identifying and understanding the interests and concerns of everyone involved in or affected by a project. Using this approach, we can tell who the key stakeholders in projects are, comprehend their perspectives on risks, and focus our risk management strategies to address their needs and concerns. By doing this, we can make sure that risk management initiatives are both effective and aligned with stakeholders' expectations and interests, which can lead to more successful projects.

#### 2.1.1 Communication Theory

Having communication within an organization is extremely important in order for the project owner and other stakeholders to feel safe (Tonnquist, 2018, p. 131). A communication strategy is needed to achieve specific communication goals for different stakeholders. When project stakeholders interpret good communication, this can lead to achieving effective goals. "Good interpersonal and communication skills are critical for career success in the film industry because of the highly interdependent and ambiguous nature of the work" (Jones, 1996, p.62). In communication theory, risk management is essential to understanding the encoding, transmission, and decoding of communications between senders and people who received it, especially in project-based settings. Although the main focus of communication theory is on the exchange of meaning and information, possible obstacles and uncertainties that might interfere with the communication process, like the message not being straightforward, can be dealt with by integrating the concepts of risk management.



**Figure 3.** Schematic Diagram of the Shannon-Weaver Model (Based on Al-Fedaghi, 2012, p. 2)

The initial C & W model had five components:

1. An information source that generates a message.
2. A transmitter that uses signals to encrypt the message
3. A channel that is designed to transmit signals
4. A receiver that "decodes," or recreates, the signal's message.
5. A location where the message is delivered.

Sixth, noise is a dysfunctional factor that can cause the signal received to differ from the signal given. It is any interference with the message traveling down the channel, like "static" on a cell phone or radio (Chandler, 1994).

The Shannon-Weaver Model is useful because it is relevant for comprehending the communication processes in a variety of settings, including everyday interactions. This simple communication model breaks down communication components that help develop effective communication. Using this model can lead to greater communication and then be an ideal component in creating successful projects.

Risk communication can come in many forms. A risk communication that informs and motivates people to collaborate in order to decide how the risk will be handled (prevented or reduced) is known as consensus communication (Lundgren & McMakin, 2018, p. 4). A particular type of stakeholder engagement is consensus communication of risk, which invites everyone with a stake in the risk's management to participate in decision-building. The second is care communication, which is communication about risks about dangers that

already have a way to be managed through scientific research (Lundgren & McMakin, 2018, p. 4). Another form is crisis communication when a project is faced with sudden and extreme danger (Lundgren & McMakin, 2018, p. 4). This can happen both during the emergency and after. As stated by the authors, “The more risk communication perspectives the communicators understand, the more likely they will be able to choose approaches that will meet the needs of their particular situation and audience, and the more likely their risk communication efforts will succeed.” (Lundgren & McMakin, 2018, p. 6) Knowing different ways to talk about risks helps people understand better. By picking the right way to share information, it builds trust and makes sure everyone gets the message clearly, which helps make better decisions. Usually, risk management begins with a risk assessment (Lundgren & McMakin, 2018, p.5). This is also the first thing (Tonnquist, 2018) states risk management consists of. “Risk assessment is a scientific process that characterizes risk and assesses the probability of occurrence and outcomes” (Lundgren & McMakin, 2018, p. 5). Risk managers use the information from risk assessments to decide on the best course of action. They usually inform those who could be affected by the risk, as well as those interested in the risk for various reasons, about their decisions and how they reached them. The structured, science-based method of estimating a risk's likelihood, severity, and related uncertainty is known as risk assessment (Coleman & Marks, 1999, p. 290). Techniques for assessing risk range from fully qualitative to semi-qualitative to more traditionally quantitative. The process by which risk assessments take place is influenced by several constraints, including those related to time, money, people, skills, management viewpoints, publicizing risk results, and political demands (Altenbach, 1995, p. 4). While risk awareness is important, it's not always easy to understand. Different methods can be applied to determine potential dangers and their potential severity. Many factors, including time, money, and the individuals involved, affect this process. To ensure that the risk assessment is complete and helpful for making decisions, it is important to utilize a variety of techniques and collect feedback from everyone involved. As stated in Coleman and Marks' article, “Dialogue with stakeholders, including industry, academia, government, and the general public, it is increasingly viewed as essential throughout the entire risk analysis process” (Coleman & Marks, 1999). It is accurate to say that doing risk assessments is a formal, organized, complicated, and dynamic process.

In the project risk management process, a significant stage is the risk response development phase (Ben-David & Raz, 2001, p. 1). After the identification and analysis of project risks, suitable risk response techniques must be implemented to manage the risks during project execution (Zou et al., 2007). Good risk response execution is made easier by open communication, which guarantees that everyone understands their responsibilities. In order to maintain the importance of the responses, it also allows revisions and feedback. Eliminating a risk from project deliverables is the easiest method of reducing it. When a

risk is accepted, it indicates that its severity is low enough that nothing will be done about it until and if it occurs (Zhang & Fan, 2014). This being said it's essential to communicate recognized risks clearly so that everyone is aware of them and ready to act if they do happen to occur.

The strategy of mitigation involves taking steps to lessen unacceptable risks' probabilities or effects, up to a certain point. Given the decreased probability or impact, the risk's expected value will also decrease, leading to a reduction in the risk response budget (Zhang & Fan, 2014). Effective risk mitigation strategies include putting safety measures in place, making backup plans, allocating more resources, and adjusting project schedules to accommodate unforeseen events (Tonnquist, 2018, p.238). In Lynn Frewer's article, the author states, "Effective communication might usefully focus on providing information about different kinds of uncertainty to interested stakeholders and the public, possibly using multiple methods... For example, assessment uncertainty is an important factor in deciding how to act, i.e. whether to reduce risk (through risk mitigation action) ..." (Frewer, 2004, p. 395). Frewer's discussion on the need to share knowledge regarding uncertainties is followed by evidence that explains to individuals the reasons behind the necessity for risk mitigation measures. This being said, it is essential to ensure that everyone is aware of what is happening and the reasoning behind the actions taken to reduce risks.

### *2.1.2 Stakeholder Theory*

Hartmann et.al. (2020, p.59) explain that the stakeholder view implies that organizations exist to fulfill the demands of several stakeholder groups. The authors mean by this that no stakeholder permanently holds a special status as more important than others, however, there is still a possibility that some stakeholders, at least for the moment, are more important to the organization than others. An organization's stakeholders are individuals and organizations who in one way or another, contribute to and benefit from the organization in question, these groups are as follows; Owners, Customers, Employees, Suppliers, Lenders, and Society (Hartmann et.al.2020, p.59).

The stakeholder analysis is a key aspect in the situational analysis, knowing the project's various stakeholders and their respective expectations is highly important for the project manager. In the stakeholder analysis, various stakeholders are identified, as well as how they are affected or how they influence the project. Categorizing stakeholders is a good way to determine how to handle them, some stakeholders will be of higher importance than others (Tonnquist, 2021, p.114-115).

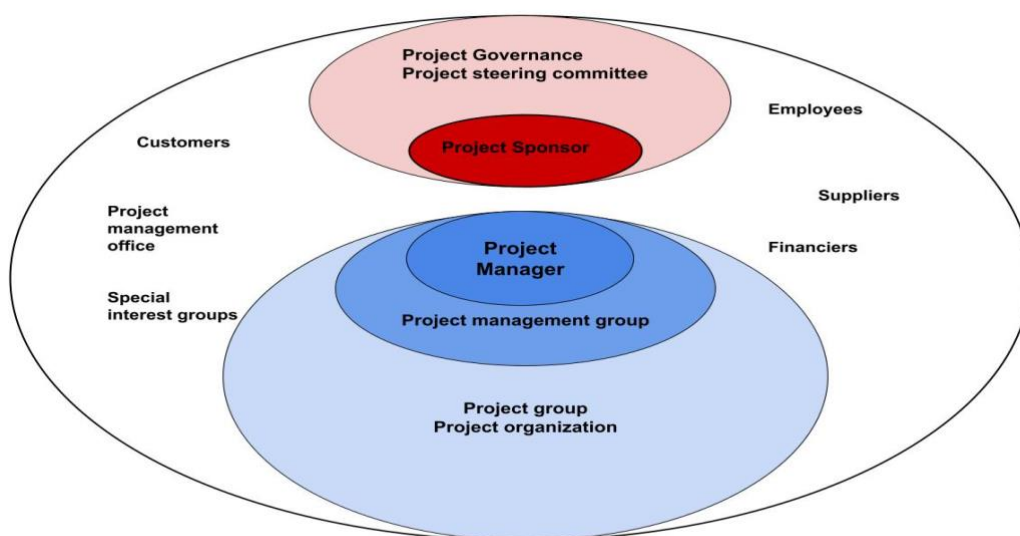
Tonnquist (2021, p.115) presents the categories to divide stakeholders into, these are core, primary, and secondary stakeholders. Core stakeholders are prime movers and/or decision-

makers in the project. Primary stakeholders are individuals, groups, and organizations that are highly affected by the project and therefore want to influence it. Secondary stakeholders are individuals, groups, and organizations with a relatively low interest in the project, who will likely not actively influence it (Tonnquist, 2021, p.115).

Furthermore, it is necessary to ensure that the most important stakeholders have expectations that are in line with the project's goals. Since it is difficult to please everybody, it is important to prioritize between different stakeholders and their goals (Hartmann et.al.2020, p.117).

Xia et al (2018) suggest that integrating risk and stakeholder management is challenging but can be a novel way to improve project performance. Furthermore, their study proposes and demonstrates that management processes and management outcomes of risk and stakeholder management can be enhanced through new ways of thinking about, analyzing, and then managing risk and stakeholder issues in a holistic and integrated way. Xia et al. (2018, p.703) explain that the stages of risk management and stakeholder management are similar in identifying and classifying elements (risk or stakeholders), analyzing, responding, and ultimately controlling each element. Furthermore, the authors present risk-stakeholder connection themes, among these are: (1) Management of risk based on stakeholder identification, (2) Internal stakeholder's responsibility and ability in the risk management process, (3) Management of stakeholder's differences concerning risk and (4) Interrelatedness RM and SM on project performance (Xia et al. 2018, p.707).

Considering the role of stakeholder identification and categorization and its importance for risk management in projects, we find that it could be helpful to use a stakeholder map, as well for analyzing the stakeholders in the film industry. Below is an example of what a standardized stakeholder map looks like:



**Figure 4.** Example of a stakeholder model/map per the standard ISO 215000, which divides stakeholders into three main categories: - Project Governance - Project organization - Other stakeholders. As in Tonnquist (2021, p.115)

### 2.1.3 Risk Identification

In this section, we will go in-depth about Risk Identification, Qualitative and Quantitative Risk Analysis, Risk Response Planning, and Contingency Reserve. We will dig deeper into these because they are all the aspects making up risk management according to Tonnquist (2021).

Tonnquist (2021, p. 231) explains that through risk identification, possible risk events are found. A risk event is a single event that can affect the project in a negative direction.

Brainstorming is described as a good way of identifying risk events, this is usually done by the project group, guided by the project manager. Adding on to this, the author of another article states, “A large number of techniques exist for risk identification, such as brainstorming and workshops, checklists and prompt lists, questionnaires and interviews...” (Hillson, 2002) This proves there are many strategies people take to identify risks. Furthermore, Tonnquist describes the potential risk level as a parameter used to prioritize and choose between projects to perform. During the pre-study, the situational analysis can be seen as a first risk analysis, threats and weaknesses are identified for possible solutions and method choices ahead of execution. According to Tonnquist (2021, p.231), the majority of threats and weaknesses should be handled through the choice of solution and smart planning, so the effects of these are eliminated or minimized.

Tonnquist (2021, p.232) explains that in risk identification, it is best to use as many sources as possible, such as:

- The assignment description
- The scope
- The situational analysis
- The requirements specification
- The solution selected
- Time and resource estimates
- Resource and staffing plans
- The risk durability of stakeholders
- Other projects within the organization

The author further explains that risk events are usually organized into risk categories, which should be well-defined and represent current risk sources in the applied industry. The internal environment of a project can give rise to a risk situation contributing to



increased risks, such as poor project management culture and a lack of integrated management systems (Tonnquist, 2021, p.232). Tonnquist (2021, p.233) presents some examples of risk categories which are as follows:

- Risks related to technology, quality, and execution - untested technology, poor goals, switching technical platforms.
- Risks related to project management - poor allocation of time and resources, poor plan quality, poor management of the project group.
- Organizational risk - a lack of prioritization, unclear financing, and resource collision with other projects.
- External risks - amended laws and regulations, labor conflicts, changes in ownership, national risks, and weather.

#### *2.1.4 Qualitative and Quantitative Risk Analysis*

Tonnquist (2021, p.234) explains that qualitative and quantitative risk analysis deals with the probability of a risk event happening, and the consequences this will have on the project. The author presents the mini-risk method, gap analysis, the maxi-risk method, and the opportunity and risk matrix. Using the mini-risk method is easy, the probabilities and consequences are evaluated and rated on a scale from one to five, where one is the lowest and five is the highest. The risk value is calculated by multiplying “likelihood” with “consequence”. The project manager determines which level of risk value should occasion an action and which risks he or she can live with, but it is the project owner who has the ultimate responsibility for determining what should be done based on the risk analysis risks (Tonnquist, 2021, p.234).

Positive risk refers to something positive that may occur thanks to an action, an opportunity and risk matrix can be constructed to visualize these positive risks (Tonnquist, 2021, p.236).

A risk analysis is important to do before a film project starts so that the project manager can monitor the ones with large consequences and likelihood of happening, the project manager should implement an action plan for these risks ahead of the project to minimize the harm these could have on the project.

#### *2.1.5 Risk Response Planning*

An action plan should be established with strategies for realizing possibilities and handling risks, the opportunities that give the best result, and the risk events that affect the project most should have top priority (Tonnquist, 2021, p.236). “Typically, project executions implies working with known unknowns” (Alami, 2016, p. 68). This emphasizes that there will always be a chance of risks occurring during execution no matter how much planning

occurs. Tonnquist (2021, p.238) explains that there should be a margin in the budget for actions that might be taken to reduce certain risks, when a risk action has been approved the risk evaluation should be updated. Furthermore, the author describes that an action should be:

1. Adequate for the risk level.
2. Cost-effective.
3. Timely
4. Realistic.
5. Accepted and approved
6. Performed by a designated person.

Furthermore, some examples of strategies for risk actions are presented:

- Avoid Risks - change the project plan to eliminate the risk or to protect the project from the effect of the risk.
- Transfer risk - shift the risk to a third party, such as an insurance company.
- Reduce risk - ameliorate the effect of an identified risk by implementing actions that decrease the likelihood and/or the consequences of the risk.
- Accept risks - no changes are made to the project plan following risk identification.

### *2.1.6 Contingency Reserve*

Having a contingency reserve is a way to minimize the consequences of cost and/or scheduling risks. A reserve for managing risks, both analyzed and unknown. The former by assessing economic consequences if the risk event occurs and a connected action plan, the latter by setting up a reserve (Tonnquist, 2021, p.238).

### **3. Methodology**

This section will give a background to the components of the methodology applied throughout our study.

We first start by explaining why we chose to use qualitative data versus quantitative data. Throughout this section, we go into detail on how qualitative data aligns with our research objectives.

After, we discuss our data collection procedures. This means we explain how the data will be collected for our study. This includes specifying our methods and discussing how interviews represent the best way to get the information necessary to answer our research questions.

Then in our participant selection, we describe how participants were selected for our particular study. We include details on who was selected by inserting a chart that has details on the interview number, the participant's work role, the number of years worked in the film industry, and the duration of the interview. All the relevant background information from the interview is in a simple table.

In our data analysis method, we bring the reader through how the collected data will be analyzed in order to be useful in our research.

Our last section in the methodology chapter will address ethical considerations and limitations involved in the research process. On top of limitations, this includes informed consent, permission to record the interview, confidentiality, and data protection. As well-being and feeling comfortable while being interviewed is our top priority while interviewing our participants, this is an important aspect of our research.

#### ***3.1 Choosing the Qualitative Data Approach***

In the process of gathering and analyzing data, qualitative research typically prioritizes words over statistics. Generally speaking, qualitative research is interpretative, constructionist, and inductive; however, not all of these theoretical stances are held by qualitative researchers (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019). These authors also state that using questions that are more open throughout the interviews, allows for the chances of collecting the interviewee's real point of view is more likely. This being said this can lead the study in different paths than what we could expect (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019, p. 254).

“Qualitative interviews enable the researcher to maintain a specific focus” (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019, p. 258). This is an advantage of using qualitative data for our research because it allows us to dig deeper into the experiences, perspectives, and practices that are involved in risk management. Qualitative interviewing is a good fit for qualitative studies since the interview can be more focused on answering particular research questions.

### *3.2 Data Collection Procedures*

As the film industry is large based on primarily collaborations, qualitative data is a must from people working in the industry. Gaining an insider’s perspective of the film production process, including the decision-making process during pre-production, rising conflicts, and different strategies is the goal of doing interviews. Since qualitative researchers are usually interested not just in *what* people say but the *way* they say it (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019, p. 445) when professionals in the film industry participated in semi-structured interviews, they were then recorded and later transcribed for additional study. We interviewed five top-management industry professionals. By interviewing top management in the industry, we get the most useful information on how communication and stakeholder engagement are managed. All interviews were held online with the platform Microsoft Teams as all the candidates we are interviewing are in the United States and the researchers are in Sweden. We also opted to use Microsoft Teams because as stated by Bell, Bryman, & Harley (2019, p. 446), “The problem with transcribing interviews is that it is very time-consuming.” By using Microsoft Teams, once the recording has started, the automatic transcription also starts. For accuracy, the transcription is edited later by the researchers. The interviews were planned to last between forty-five minutes to an hour in order to get as much information as possible that would help defend our thesis. Voluntarily by the interviewee, some interviews went over an hour. The interview questions were based on our theoretical framework using the communication and stakeholder theory. While generating theories is usually the purpose of qualitative research, it can also be used to test theories (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019, p.36). As stated before, the questions were open-ended, and with this being said the interviewees spoke on their personal experiences in the industry to answer our theoretical framework-based questions and add anything else they believed was relevant.

### *3.3 Participant Selection*

Our five subjects for our interviews consisted of university professors who are also working professionals in the industry. All of them were interested in our thesis and agreed to be a part of the research process. As people working in the film industry usually have a very busy

schedule, finding the time to conduct interviews was difficult. We learned that the researchers must conduct the interviews based on the subjects' timetable (Jones, 1996, p.60). Most interviews were held on the weekend or early in the morning so that the interviewee was able to provide us with the full hour of their time. Jones (1996, p.60) states in their work, "I had to prove that I was both persistent and motivated to do the interviews before some of them would grant me the time. However, once they granted me the time, they were incredibly generous and gave me several hours and follow-up questions and responses." In our case, one of the researchers has had most of our respondents as professors in the past. This helped us gain subjects to interview since they already knew one of the people interviewing them, and trusted the researchers were serious about their work.

Interviewee	Work Role	# of Years Worked in the Film Industry	Duration of Interview
Interviewee 1	Director	8 Years	1 Hour 6 Minutes 8 Seconds
Interviewee 2	Cinematographer	39 Years	1 Hour 9 Minutes 25 Seconds
Interviewee 3	Screenwriter	26 Years	55 Minutes 20 Seconds
Interviewee 4	Director	9 Years	45 Minutes 37 Seconds
Interviewee 5	Producer	52 Years	50 Minutes 3 Seconds

**Table 1.** List and description of interviews.

The roles of our participants varied, but all were top-management workers.

Our first interview was with a director who is still fairly new in the industry only working in it for eight years. While they do not have experience in directing feature film sets, they provided us with useful information of their way, as a director, on risk management on smaller film sets they have worked on.

Our next interview was with a cinematographer who has been in the industry for over thirty-nine years. They provided us with their perspective on all types of film sets they have

worked on over the timeline of their career. They were also very passionate about talking about risk management in the film industry based on their own experience.

Our third interview was with someone who has done a variety of roles in the film industry over the last twenty-six years but mainly refers to himself as a screenwriter aside from being a film professor. As they have worked on everything from music videos, feature and student film sets, television series, etc they were able to provide us with information about their perspective on risk management from the creative and business perspective.

Our fourth interview was with a new professor who teaches creative producing and works professionally in the industry. After graduating from film school, they considered themselves to have been working in the film industry for nine years. As they have not worked in the film industry as long as some of our other interviewees, they provided a great perspective on a variety of roles they have been involved in.

Our last interview was with someone extremely high up in the industry. They have worked professionally in film for over half a decade. They have produced some very well-known movies and TV shows on popular streaming services but consider television as their specialty in terms of producing. They were able to provide our research with a highly professional perspective on producing.

### *3.4 Data Analysis Methods*

The interviews were automatically transcribed using Microsoft Teams' transcription software, the interviews were also recorded. Re-listening of the recordings was done to make sure the transcription was correct and to interpret the data. Thematic analysis was used as a method of analyzing our empirical data. Thematic analysis is a term used in connection with the analysis of quantitative data, it is used to extract key themes in one's data (Bell et. al p.729).

As the recordings were relistened to, findings were connected to our initial themes and structured in these categories. This was done to reduce the data down to a manageable set of key findings. The initial themes were as follows, stakeholder engagement, communication, and risk management in pre-production. For each theme, we gathered the key findings of each interview to create a clear understanding of our findings. Of course, subcategories could be added to the themes, such as financial risks, etc. However, for this research, we found that sticking to our themes as structured in the interviews would be the best way to analyze our data.

### *3.5 Ethical Considerations and Limitations*

Starting with a limitation, biases, and subjective interpretations can affect the data gathered for the study, especially when using qualitative approaches like interviews. Due to differences in their jobs, experiences, and personal viewpoints, stakeholders' assessments of risk management effectiveness and project success could be biased or incomplete.

While we interviewed professors who are working professionals in the industry, it could be difficult to obtain thorough information about risk management procedures and project results in the film business. Some of the people working for the film production businesses could be hesitant to explain information that they might think is private information about their work or think they are exposing something that they should not be, which could result in data gaps and make accurate analysis difficult to complete.

Another limitation that can be declared is that qualitative results might not be generalizable because of the study's narrow focus and small sample size. However, the focus is on obtaining rich, detailed insights rather than making broad generalizations; therefore, qualitative data is still considered to be the best option. Since qualitative data is quite time-consuming, we made enough time for each interview, as well as scheduling time to re-listen to the interview after it is recorded.

An additional limitation could be that all our participants are working professionals in the American film industry and our sample size was limited to five interviews. Although the insights are valuable, it is possible they do not accurately reflect the experiences of foreign film industry workers. Cultural and industry differences in different parts of the world mean all workers maintain different strategies. This being said, our findings cannot apply everywhere.

The study's goals, methods, and participant rights were clearly explained to all participants at the beginning of the interview. Before conducting interviews or utilizing any data, each participant gave their informed consent. The responses of participants remained confidential, and all information stayed anonymous to safeguard the identity of participants. At the beginning of each interview, all participants gave their verbal permission to be recorded for the interview to be transcribed later. During interviews, all private or delicate information disclosed has been kept private. All participants were treated with respect, dignity, and sensitivity throughout the research process. During the interviews, lines of communication were open, verifying the experiences of the participants, and the researchers listened intently.

## 4. Empirical Findings

This section presents the key information gathered from our research. Through a series of interviews with top management, including directors, producers, screenwriters, and cinematographers. The empirical findings provide a window into the real-world experiences, challenges, and practices of film industry professionals. Throughout our empirical data, we will explore the findings in detail, emphasizing significant trends and the interviewee's implications.

### 4.1 Interviewee 1

Interviewee one has been working professionally in the film industry for five years; but, has been making films and pursuing it as a career for about eight years. They pursued this career for the passion of making great films which explains the deep passion they have for creating for their pure enjoyment. Interviewee one currently works as a director.

#### 4.1.1 Stakeholder Engagement

With interviewee one we get the perspective of stakeholder engagement from someone working as a director, which makes the focus more on what a director handles, and not so much the budgeting and other things that a producer might be more concerned with.

When it comes to stakeholder engagement, it starts with selecting the right team, as interviewee one explains: "*You're essentially assembling a team of highly skilled professionals in every department.*" Here, they emphasize the importance of selecting team members who bring the right skills and expertise to each role, ensuring that everybody contributes to the project's goals.

Interviewee one further explains that each stakeholder can have their own reason for engaging in the project, ranging from creative fulfillment to financial interest: "*Everyone will have their own reasons for being a part of the project*" (Interviewee 1).

When asked if any stakeholders are extra important, interviewee one stresses the importance of everyone involved; "*Film making is such a team sport, you know everyone is important. Really. Everyone has their place in a project.*" (Interviewee 1).

This shows the mindset of the interviewee and the effort to see everyone involved in the project contributing to the success of a film.

Interviewee one also explains how being professional, and well prepared can help to get the trust of different stakeholders, which will help in aligning stakeholders and the project



getting done smoothly: *“If you show them that you've thought the project through, and you have some idea of what direction you're going in, it will give them more confidence in you and want to invest in your project”* (Interviewee 1). In this case, they refer specifically to gaining the trust of investors.

They also stress the importance of having a good pitch for the story to engage stakeholders: *“I think that's the ultimate thing for anything, having your story pitched down cold, you should have it memorized and you can deliver it with passion, that will illuminate what you're trying to do with the film from a narrative point of view to people”* (Interviewee 1). This shows the different skills needed to align stakeholders, with good preparation and communication being an essential part of it.

#### 4.1.2 Communication

Effective communication during pre-production is vital for setting the stage for a successful film project. Interviewee one emphasizes the dual necessity of passion and clarity in communication, *“It's like giving a speech or a performance. So, if you could bring those two things together then I think you're in good shape”* (Interviewee 1). This highlights how critical it is to inspire and inform stakeholders simultaneously.

Tailoring communication to meet the diverse needs of different stakeholders, from creative visionaries to technical crew and financial sponsors is crucial. Interviewee one states that: *“Everyone will have their own reasons for being a part of the project because the bottom line is this reality is this of films”* (Interviewee 1). Recognizing these individual motivations can help develop more effective communication strategies.

Moreover, interviewee one talks about aligning stakeholder expectations with the project's goals, *“Ideally, you work with let's say stakeholders who love the story right? So, it's a creative passion for them”* (Interviewee 1). This approach can make sure stakeholders are emotionally invested in the project, and thus want the project to succeed.

#### 4.1.3 Risk Management in Pre-Production

Risk management during pre-production involves setting the groundwork for the film by anticipating and mitigating potential risks. *“Safety is number one... it's planning that (safety) with professionals and setting up a protocol for figuring out who's responsible for what and making sure people stay safe”* (Interviewee 1). Emphasizing the importance of safety and planning in the pre-production.

Risk management extends beyond immediate safety concerns. It includes extensive planning addressing all potential challenges that could arise during production. *"If you plan for all that ahead of time in pre-production you can avoid a lot of unnecessary stress"* (Interviewee 1). The interviewee notes, highlighting the broader scope of risk management which includes scheduling, budgeting, and resource allocation.

Additionally, interviewee one reflects on the importance of having flexible and adaptable plans, *"You can't change a plan if you don't have a plan... everyone has their own methods"* (Interviewee 1). This underscores the necessity for a well-thought-out plan that accommodates unforeseen circumstances, crucial for managing unexpected challenges effectively.

Risk management in pre-production is about anticipating potential issues and planning adequately to address them before they escalate. It requires a mix of strict adherence to safety protocols and the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances, ensuring the project's smooth progression. The interview with interviewee one provides insights into the interconnected roles of stakeholder engagement, communication, and risk management in the pre-production phase of film projects. Each element is vital to the film's successful development and execution, illustrating the complex tapestry of film production management.

## 4.2 Interviewee 2

Interviewee two has been professionally working in the film industry since 1985. They have worked on everything from movies and television to corporate films and so forth. They are currently doing financial videos for a large corporate company right now outside of teaching. Their primary job within the film industry for most of their career was being a cinematographer.

### 4.2.1 Stakeholder Engagement

Since their interaction was primarily with people working on set, they didn't have much experience or interaction with the investment side of the stakeholders. As a cinematographer, they were in close collaboration with the director from early on in pre-production of the film. In their opinion, the director is the most important stakeholder in a film production project. When asked about aligning the expectations of different stakeholders with the goals of the film project particularly when there are competing interests, the interviewee brings up that it is extremely challenging. They bring up that it really comes down to leadership and personality. *"Once you're on the ground actually*

*shooting a film it can easily become like a circus environment. If you don't have strong leadership the entire thing can diverge into different ways*" (Interviewee 2). This gives a taste of the insights into the chaos on a production set. They also mentioned that when working with different roles on set, your decision-making point of view is different. *"It's not like working in an office when day-to-day things are predictable, every day on a film set is different from the day before"* (Interviewee 2). This creates a psychology amongst the workers that creates tension for the fear of the unknown.

#### 4.2.2 Communication

The first thing interviewee two brings up in ensuring effective communication is the fact that everyone on set has a walkie-talkie radio with a headset in order for all departments to be in contact with each other. *"Anytime there is a potential danger that's unusual on set, the director calls for safety meetings explaining the potential dangers and what is being done to mitigate the danger"* (Interviewee 2). The most important part they mention when discussing this is that the safety meetings are not always conducted due to the lack of time on set and stakeholders mainly thinking about the budget of the film. Stakeholders also try to emphasize paying attention while on set because sometimes the set is as safe as it can be, but if someone is not paying attention, it can easily lead to accidents.

As far as dealing with stakeholder conflict, interviewee two decided to bring up a sensitive personal experience. Early in their career, they were working on a very low-budget film, that did not take all the precautions they should, and it involved guns. They saw an actor at the coffee table where the guns were laid analyzing and holding one of the guns.

Interviewee two went up to the actor and asked, *"Are you sure that gun is not loaded?"* The actor proceeded to point the gun at interviewee two and stated, *"I don't know."* Interviewee two mentioned this received a laugh from some of the cast and crew members but took extreme maturity in interviewee two to not start a physical conflict with the actor. Thinking about their career and how it would be affected if they proceeded to start physical conflict, they may never have worked in the film industry again. *"One of the reasons I didn't do more than I did at the time was because people are not only stakeholders in the project, but stakeholders in their own career"* (Interviewee 2). With how competitive a film career is when filmmakers are just starting, they may feel overwhelmed and insecure they are not good enough for the industry; hence, not sticking up for themselves. In an industry based on connections, many try to make their best impressions early on.

Communication is an important factor when it comes to speaking on risks that some other stakeholders might not see as risks. Interviewee two elaborates on a time they were working on a thesis film, and they used their voice to communicate a large risk that the director did

not consider a risk. The scene called for an actor to have a plastic bag pulled over her head and nearly suffocate her. Interviewee two explained to the director that you cannot do that and at first the director argued that it was safe since a system was set up by the actor to indicate if she was actually suffocating throughout the scene. After long discussions and arguments, the scene ended up being eliminated.

#### 4.2.3 Risk Management in Pre-Production

When asked to state some of the most common risks faced in film production, interviewee two answered, *“It is usually cars and traffic, but depends on where you are shooting.”* This being said it is important during pre-production to get the right permits for shooting in certain locations. By doing this, the right emergency services can assist in keeping the set a safe environment.

*“In the film industry it’s not uncommon to work sixteen-hour days on a set, and then the problem is after you have to get yourself home”* (Interviewee 2). This itself creates its own safety issues. When you start and end work when it is dark outside it could be very disorientating. There is a lot of conflict in the film industry about this topic because there was a movement to limit hours to twelve hours a day, but since crew members like to get paid time and a half and even double time after twelve hours, the movement did not have the support in order to make an impact. Nothing has changed with these long hours. *“It is an issue that does not make sense to me because I think crews become less efficient after a certain number of hours, my suggestion has always been to make a day shift and night shift of crews”* (Interviewee 2). This could save the production money, but it is too much of a logistics issue.

*“Amateur filmmaking can be quite dangerous as I have discovered. This is because the people working on those sets do not have the experience or knowledge to anticipate issues that are easily anticipated on a film set that contains more experienced people working on it”* (Interviewee 2). The more that the stakeholders are taught to identify and analyze risks, it can lead to deeper planned films. *“What I think I have learned the most is to identify problems, not just with potential risks, but with potential people creating risks”* (Interviewee 2). It can be identified quickly when someone does not have experience or does not know what they are doing. Although pre-production is the most important phase in identifying risks, the day of the shoot is also important. Gathering the crew together and going through everything for the day at the safety meeting is important on the day of shooting so that everyone is informed of the risks taking place that day.

In terms of whether managing risks properly during pre-production affects the success of a film, interviewee two strongly believes it does. *“A lot of times people will cut costs at the expense of safety and nothing bad will happen and nobody will ever hear about it. But if something goes wrong, it can go very very wrong.”* (Interviewee 2). Anytime something substandard happens it has an impact on the film.

The interviewee clarifies that during pre-production there is a process that all department heads go through when they read through the script, and then identify anything that can be considered a risk, and then they make accommodations based on this. For example, deciding if a certain scene requires stunt doubles, the safety measures required if having weapons on set, and any other dangers inherent within the story. One time in their experience while they were operating a camera on a movie, they had to go up in a large lift that a utility worker would use forty feet up in the air. One of the stakeholders put in place the safety measure of making sure the camera operator had a safety harness on and escorted him on the lift, essentially to make sure he did not fall. This being said this was a safety measure that was agreed upon by the assistant director during the pre-production of the film. *“These types of things should be standard in the film industry”* (Interviewee 2). Interviewee two is the first to discuss an incident on set that is well known by many and is later addressed by interviewees in additional interviews we conducted. The incident was that a cinematographer was accidentally shot and killed on set by an actor with a loaded gun in the movie *Rust*. *“Many people in the industry are debating about what the issue was, and the biggest problem was that in order to save production costs, they hired an inexperienced crew member to handle the guns”* (Interviewee 2). This is an issue and incident that should have been more planned for during pre-production because of the use of weapons on set. Cutting costs on set leads to not hiring people who are competent in terms of dealing with things like guns on set, which makes the production set extremely risky.

### 4.3 Interviewee 3

Interviewee three has been working in film since graduating from film school in 1998. Throughout their career, they have worked on films, television shows, and music videos. Apart from teaching their current role in the film industry is being a freelance screenwriter, but throughout most of their career, they considered themselves a screenwriter and a director.

#### 4.3.1 Stakeholder Engagement

They explain that typically on a film project you have two types of stakeholders. On one side of a film production, you have the people who make the film (cinematographers, producers,

etc), and anyone else in the end credits. On the other side of the project, you have the people who are responsible for financing the production, distributing, and then exhibiting it. *“The distributor is usually the least known in a project, but probably one of the most important”* (Interviewee 3). They are the ones who come up with the money or finance the film, in the typical Hollywood model. The exhibitors are typically movie theaters, but now it is more and more becoming streaming services. *“Everybody in the chain of production, distribution, and exhibition, they are all stakeholders. It is a multibillion-dollar worldwide industry”* (Interviewee 3). This being said it is important to prioritize somebody who can get your film out to the widest audience possible because that usually means more money for your film and a larger audience.

*“It is pretty common that people get fired from projects because they don’t want to perform a job”* (Interviewee 3). This is where contracts come in. If an actor does not want to participate in a stunt or may have boundaries in terms of nudity or intimacy, then the actor should have it specified in their contract, and they should not be forced to participate. On the contrary, if it is not in your contract and the actor has changed their mind about participating in the stunt, there are all types of ways to “force” this person to participate and stay engaged in the project. This is where threats to fire the person come in if they refuse to do as they are told.

*“The more you go over budget, the more you risk losing money on that project if it is not as successful as expected”* (Interviewee 3). This insight emphasizes the critical importance of effective budget management in ensuring the financial success of a project. Having an actor who is also a part of the top management of a film and engaged in the project from the very beginning, helps to mitigate the risk for the studio who produces it. For example, an actor who is also a producer on the film. It is not a situation where a producer and director get together to create a project, the project is usually pre-casted by the actor. In this case, after the film is released, it is also the responsibility of the actor to advertise for publicity reasons and to get a larger audience to go and view the film.

#### 4.3.2 Communication

When asked if there is a way to ensure effective communication between stakeholders, in interviewee two’s opinion, there is not. *“Problems with communication can be one of the things that derail a project. But good communication can often be the thing that helps projects overcome challenges and obstacles”* (Interviewee 3). They also explain that there have been a great number of discussions about people in power mistreating filmmakers. *“The incident in Rust is a communication issue, it is an issue where somebody didn’t properly tell the actor he was holding a loaded gun”* (Interviewee 3). By not having clear

communication sorted out in this film, someone was killed. Now that this has happened, the film is ruined and the chances that it will never be finished are high. Therefore, ruining any success it could have had. With these examples, there is now more emphasis on prioritizing communication. It is important to make it clear that everyone's voice is going to be heard.

A massive reason that risks occur, is because there is no clear communication from the beginning. Interviewee three explains when he was working on a project that was far into pre-production and production and the director and cinematographer decided they couldn't work together because they had been arguing a significant amount. This affected the entirety of the rest of the stakeholders because they all had to be disbursed to work on other films. If the director and cinematographer had been more effective in communicating with each other at the beginning of pre-production, this could have been avoided.

Interviewee three dives deeper into an example from their career where poor communication led to a risk occurring in film production. They explained that they were shooting a scene with a child actor and the actor's parent had just dropped the child off at the shoot and left. Everything went well in the morning shoot until they had called a break for lunch. One of the crewmembers saw the child eating cookies, and then it came to everyone's attention that the child was allergic to peanuts. After calling the mother of the child and finding out it was only a mild peanut allergy and the cookies did not contain any peanuts, everything was okay. Interviewee three elaborates on how this could have led to something very disastrous, and very much affect the future of the entire film. This was a miscommunication issue because the parent did not make it known to the crew of the child's allergies, and the producer did not provide allergy forms before production of the film began.

#### 4.3.3 Risk Management in Pre-Production

*"Make sure people are well fed on set. This may not seem like a mitigation strategy, but I find it very effective"* (Interviewee 3). If the stakeholders are constantly eating unhealthy food on 12–18-hour days on set, they are not working at their best. Having good meals will raise the morale of the crew and make people's experiences better, as well as having people's best work shown on the screen. Especially from the actors, as they are the ones showing up on the screen giving their best performance.

*"As a director, you try not to think about risks as you are trying to be artistic, and being an artist means trying to do something that hasn't been done before"* (Interviewee 3). They dive deeper into this by saying that as a director you can risk alienating a crew if there is no effective communication. *"Nobody ever thinks of rehearsal as a mitigation strategy, but*

*what rehearsal does is decrease the amount of time you need to spend on the set practicing for scenes*” (Interviewee 3). By having these rehearsals in pre-production, you can make communication smooth. This can also lead to cutting down the amount of time it takes to set up a scene. All of this relies on being efficient in your work to mitigate risks. Since being on set is expensive, intensive planning during pre-production is absolutely necessary to stay within budget. *“Pre-production is the most important phase for mitigating risks because after that it is too late”* (Interviewee 3). For the reason that a lot of risks are unforeseen, it is best to think and plan as much as possible in pre-production in order to be as prepared as possible for what can come. Conflict comes in when a producer is trying to mitigate risks and the director is only thinking creatively.

Budgeting and scheduling are usually the risks prioritized during pre-production. That said, they are mostly interlinked; if something goes over schedule, it will lead to going over budget, and if you run out of money you will not be able to accomplish your schedule. As being overprepared could lead to less creativity when making a movie, it is an attempt to have the lowest amount of risk. *“When I had projects that didn’t end successfully, it was usually a communication issue”* (Interviewee 3). Being young also leads to many risks. Filmmakers who are just starting usually create the sets with the most amount of risk because they are inexperienced. As someone moves up in the industry, it can lead to them becoming a better communicator. *“All of the preparation strategies that young filmmakers are taught that help make a better product are all risk mitigation strategies”* (Interviewee 3). As risk management can only take a film so far, doing things that no one has done before is crucial for the success of a movie.

#### 4.4 Interviewee 4

Interviewee four started working professionally in the film industry in 2015. They were a producer’s assistant in New York City working mainly on creative development. After getting their masters in directing in 2019, they are now working as an independent writer, producer, and director. They claim their main role in the film industry is being a director as of right now.

##### 4.4.1 Stakeholder Engagement

Interviewee four believes that in a film project, everyone is a stakeholder. *“You have two separate things, you have people who have the actual rights to the material (the people who are creating it), they might be the logistical stakeholders. But then you have everyone who worked on the film to make it possible.”* (Interviewee 4) They state that they prioritize stakeholders by making sure the entire team is invested in what they are about to create before the film even starts. Making sure everyone is working toward the same goal from the



beginning of a project, it mitigates competing interests on set. *“Once you have the foundation of everyone being on board for the common end goal of the film, I think interests are more aligned. You will have people with different workflows, stress levels, etc, so for me, it is important to learn exactly who I am working with”* (Interviewee 4). They emphasize that it is something that comes with time and experience. This being said, it is important to cater to different people based on their personalities more than their interests because hopefully, everyone is working with the same interest. *“Lots of meetings and conversations are how stakeholders are involved in the identification and mitigation of risks during pre-production”* (Interviewee 4). Previsualization is inevitably important when you walk through the project and process and identify the concerns and potential problems. *“You start at the script stage to see what a problem during production can be”* (Interviewee 4). Hence, while starting during the script stage (pre-production), it leaves room for mistakes during production. *“Since every project is unique, there is not this one size fits all model, it is examining each film individually and saying what is the care and consideration we need to take for this film to bring it successfully through to production”* (Interviewee 4). This highlights the importance of flexibility and adaptability while working on a project in the film industry because each project demands a customized approach to be successful.

#### 4.4.2 Communication

The more and clear communication, the better. *“When you’re in development and you know what you are working toward, being affirmative of what the end goal is, and then shaping the communication from that point forward is essential”* (Interviewee 4). This can be molded by scheduling check-ins with your team and having an open-door policy that everyone’s voice is heard. By making sure everyone feels supported and able to express themselves, creating a safe space is key to effective communication. *“Pre-production is the space to work out all of the potential problems. That is the space you should be communicating the most because it will streamline everything that will happen after when you hit production days”* (Interviewee 4). With this said, allowing time and effort for pre-production is effective in order for production to go smoothly.

Since interviewee four takes the time and effort to make sure their team is who they want working on their projects, they have been fortunate enough to not encounter any stakeholder conflict during pre-production. On the other hand, they have been involved in projects where conflict is common. They manage this by effectively communicating with the director on how they can handle the problems that are occurring on set. *“Like I said before, prep work is key, and open communication in the process is so important”* (Interviewee 4). An example they bring up is when scouting locations during pre-production, looping in

certain people to make sure the location checks the boxes in terms of what is needed from the film visually is essential. Not only that but ensuring the location works for the production in terms of aspects such as sound. If you have a great location visually, but you are shooting dialogue scenes under a train, this leads to risks and conflict. *“If you have the right people involved, communication can avoid these situations easily”* (Interviewee 4). Having open communication and ensuring everyone is aware of the end goal and what direction the production is heading in, allows for consideration of all the different aspects of what the project will entail.

#### 4.4.3 Risk Management in Pre-Production

Carefully working through prep and knowing that each film project is going to be different while considering the concept of the project is how risk management during pre-production is approached according to interviewee four. *“When using contracts, making sure they are clear can be a strategy to utilize to avoid risks”* (Interviewee 4). Implementing different scheduling principles can also avoid some risks during production. As far as budgeting, making sure certain strategies are implemented from the very beginning in pre-production is essential in order for the production, post-production, and distribution to have the highest chance for success.

Interviewee four claims they have seen many films “die” in post-production because the film prioritized capturing the shots during production and spent the majority of the budget filming footage to use, but then they are left with no budget to edit the footage in post-production. *“In pre-production, prioritizing how you’re communicating with locations, or the people who are giving a service for the film is important as well”* (Interviewee 4). Taking the time to understand on all sides what the film is going to entail and being clear on this is a priority during pre-production.

*“When you are talking to locations to use in production, make sure you are speaking to people with ownership. Not just a representative because it can cause miscommunications or problems you did not anticipate on the day of the shoot; this is the last thing you want”* (Interviewee 4). They speak on experience when they describe a time they were working on a project and the producer had thought they set a location, but the owner of the location did not agree. This led to the shoot being canceled that day and disrupted the schedule for the rest of filming. Going hand and hand with preparation, risk management is one of the most important factors contributing to a film’s success, according to interviewee four. *“I see a lot of projects fail when not enough preparation is done”* (Interviewee 4). At the end of the day, going about risk management in a way that the priorities are clear, can determine what the stakeholders get out of production.

## 4.5 Interviewee 5

Interviewee five has been involved in the film industry for fifty-two years, and they have worked on both films and TV productions. This being said, they have extensive knowledge in these fields. Currently, they are working as co-executive producer of a large television series. In addition to being a co-executive producer, they have worked as a line producer, unit manager, director, and writer.

### 4.5.1 Stakeholder Engagement

Interviewee five starts by outlining the distinct roles of financial and creative stakeholders. *“Financial stakeholders, typically studios and networks, are primarily concerned with the monetary aspects of a project. In contrast, creative stakeholders, including directors, writers, and actors, focus on the artistic outcomes”* (Interviewee 5).

Interviewee five explains the importance of regular updates to keep everyone on the same page. *“Throughout the project, stakeholders are receiving updated progress reports”* (Interviewee 5). These updates are important for keeping all parties informed and engaged, creating an environment of trust and transparency that is critical for a project's smooth progression.

Interviewee five also explains that aligning stakeholders is not a large issue since everyone involved wants a good result. *“I don't know if there are competing interests. I think everybody's idea is to make money”* but they add *“The arguments that could be, or the conflicts that develop are creative conflicts. Possibly between two actors, an actor and director, and a director and a cinematographer. Those are creative. They're not business-based”* (Interviewee 5). Such conflicts are a natural part of the creative process and require delicate handling to keep the project on track. Furthermore, the effectiveness of engagement efforts can often be measured by stakeholders' willingness to participate in future projects. Interviewee five states: *“The success of risk management would be their willingness to engage in another movie”* (Interviewee 5). Suggesting that the true test of effective stakeholder engagement is an ongoing collaboration.

### 4.5.2 Communication

Effective communication during pre-production is crucial. Interviewee five explains the necessity of clear, consistent communication with all parties involved. They further explain the role of regular formal updates, saying, *“You send them a report. Hi, we've spent this*

*much. We're on schedule.*" (Interviewee 5). These updates are straightforward yet essential for maintaining transparency with financial backers and ensuring that everyone's expectations are aligned. Despite the straightforward nature of such communications, adapting this information to meet the needs of different stakeholders can be a challenge. Each group may require different levels of detail based on their involvement and interests. As interviewee five states: *"The crew is given a schedule they know when they're on it. The crew must report their expenditures. Both labor and materials. In TV you do that every single episode. In a feature film, you do it once, and then you amend it as necessary. But everyone, while no one may know what the real bottom line is, except for the producers and maybe the director, everyone kind of knows how they're doing."*

The impact of effective communication is significant, as it can prevent costly delays and conflicts. *"You just make sure that everybody is communicative. And you make sure that you are getting timely reports on financial and other progress of production. That's it"* (Interviewee 5). Interviewee five elaborates on this, underscoring the benefits of keeping everyone informed. This not only helps in addressing issues proactively but also enhances the overall workflow, contributing to the project's success.

To enhance communication, interviewee five recommends adopting more proactive and inclusive strategies. *"The way I personally do it is I don't just sort of sit in an office and wait for the problems to come into the room. I'm down on the sets, I am on top of the location scouts, I am talking with the director and showrunner all the time about what we're finding, what we're not finding, and what kind of progress we're making in in pre-production"* (Interviewee 5). Regularly involving all stakeholders in discussions and updates build trust and ensures that diverse viewpoints are considered, which is important for making informed decisions that benefit the project.

Some stakeholders might not want or need to communicate with some parts of the organization. *"Directors want to be primarily involved in the artistic creation of their movie and they would like all of the other mundane details to be handled by other people so that they can maintain a positive interaction with primarily their caste and writer"* (Interviewee 5). This goes to show the fact that communication can sometimes be lacking between different parts of the organization, calling for the project manager to act as the spider in the web who keeps information flowing between all the people involved.

#### 4.5.3 Risk Management in Pre-Production

Interviewee five offers a detailed perspective on effective strategies for mitigating risks early in the process. They stress the importance of having contingency reserves: *"By making sure*

*you're spending only what you have to spend and have reserves to take on the inevitable changes in plans due to weather, illness, location, unavailability”.*

Interviewee five goes on to explain the messy nature of film production, *“When the cast has issues you must plan for that because you are not working in a controlled environment. You're not setting up a chip plant where it must be sterile and everything must go according to certain procedures, film is messy and unpredictable”.* In such an environment it's important to have good planning and the use of contingency plans.

One of the key strategies for mitigating financial risks is the use of completion bonds, which act as a safety net for investors. *“In feature production, there is something called a completion bond,”* (Interviewee 5). A completion bond is a contract that guarantees monetary compensation project is not finished.

Despite well-laid plans, unforeseen challenges can still arise, interviewee five brings up an example: *“In Gladiator, which is when one of the actors died, what do you do with that? Do you go back and reshoot everything well? Well, I believe they used the actor's brother for behind the scenes and then they kind of were able to use other shots for the actor's reaction”.* Being prepared to handle these risks effectively is crucial. The ability to adapt and respond to unexpected issues ensures that production can continue, safeguarding both the artistic and financial objectives of the project. They go on to explain, *“I mean it's creating reserves and not being surprised when those reserves are called for because you've planned for them”.*

Interviewee five explains how they manage the risk of equipment breaking: *“We have two cameras that work all the time and a third camera body that we keep on a truck”.*

Interviewee five further explains the risk of actors getting sick: *“We don't have duplicate actors. Those are our biggest assets”.* These problems are hard to plan for but as the interviewee mentions: *“The most important thing is to keep shooting, so anything that will stop you from filming is a fire you must put out. If an actor gets sick or the weather turns bad, you need to have a Plan B, sometimes you have a cover set that you can go to and continue work. So that should be planned”.*

Interviewee five also explains the trickiness of mitigating risks for all stakeholders, *“Mitigating risk for an actor is different than mitigating risk for an investor, because of competing priorities, which makes it tricky”* (Interviewee 5). This emphasizes the complexity of risk management in film projects.

## 5. Analysis

In an effort to address our research questions, this chapter presents the results of our investigation. The findings are compared to the theoretical framework developed in earlier chapters.

### *5.1 Stakeholder Engagement in Film Production*

From our empirical work, we found a good quantity of interesting and valuable insights into the aspect of stakeholder engagement.

#### 5.1.1. Tonnquist's Stakeholder Groups

Tonnquist (2021, p. 105-107) categorizes stakeholders into core, primary, and secondary groups. In film projects, it was discovered that depending on which role the respondent had in film production, they would consider different people being the most important stakeholders from their perspective. Interviewee Three separated the stakeholders into two groups: the creative stakeholders and the financial stakeholders. Where the creative stakeholders were those involved in making the film, and the financial stakeholders were those responsible for financing and distributing the film. Based on Tonnquist's (2021, p. 105-107) definition of core and primary stakeholders, one can argue that the director and producer should be considered core stakeholders, while the financial stakeholders and key cast members can be considered primary stakeholders. The secondary stakeholders by this definition would be minor crew members and external suppliers, while important for the production, they do not significantly influence the project. By distinguishing between core, primary, and secondary stakeholders we can better understand their respective roles and how their engagement impacts risk management. Core stakeholders drive the vision and execution of the project, while primary stakeholders focus more on specific aspects of the film's production or financial outcome. None of the respondents expressed any type of methods for stakeholder identification and prioritization, even though they didn't have a method, it was self-explanatory that they had some stakeholders as a higher priority than others since they were more crucial for the completion of the project. While Tonnquist's (2021, p. 105-107) theoretical framework offers a solid foundation, our findings suggest a more fluid and role-dependent prioritizing process in practice. The emphasis on informal yet prioritized stakeholder management indicates a potential area for formalization and improvement in stakeholder engagement practices.

Our research identified that early and continuous engagement with stakeholders is crucial for mitigating risks (Interviewees 2 and 4). This aligns with Tonnquist's (2021) Stakeholder

Theory, which emphasizes that stakeholders' interests must be considered and managed throughout the project lifecycle. By engaging stakeholders early, film projects can address their concerns, reducing the chances of conflict and delays.

### 5.1.2 Importance of Early Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is an important aspect of risk management in film projects, but ensuring all stakeholders in a project are aligned and are working towards the same goal can be tricky. By engaging stakeholders early in the pre-production phase, project managers can align their expectations with the project's goals, identify potential risks, and develop strategies to mitigate them. For instance, interviewee four emphasized that encouraging many meetings and conversations helps identify and address concerns proactively. This aligns with the theoretical perspective that integrating stakeholder engagement into risk management practices enhances project outcomes by making sure that the risk management strategies are both effective and aligned with stakeholders' expectations and interests (Xia et al. 2018, p. 707). Compared to previous research, our findings highlight the importance of integrating stakeholders more deeply into risk management practices.

### 5.1.3 Strategies for Effective Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement also involves making sure that stakeholders are aware of their roles and responsibilities, interviewee one talked about the importance of showing stakeholders that the project is well thought out and planned, as well as having a good pitch. This can help align stakeholders' interests with the project's objectives from the outset and build trust among stakeholders.

Strategies found in the empirical findings for engaging stakeholders include providing regular updates, maintaining transparent communication, and involving stakeholders in the decision-making process. Tonnquist (2021, p. 137-141) highlights the importance of clear communication channels to ensure all stakeholders feel secure and informed.

Interviewee five emphasizes the need for regular progress reports to keep stakeholders informed and engaged, creating an environment of trust and collaboration.

One of the main challenges in stakeholder engagement is managing competing interests, conflicts can arise between creative and financial stakeholders, which require delicate handling. Interviewee three explained that conflicts often occur due to poor communication and misaligned expectations. Solutions to these challenges could include prioritizing stakeholders' goals and ensuring their expectations align with the project's objective

through effective communication strategies and regular updates. Ensuring that stakeholders are involved in risk identification and mitigation from the outset can help address potential conflicts (Tonnquist, 2021, p. 105-107). While Xia et al. (2018, p. 707) discuss the benefits of stakeholder engagement, our empirical evidence emphasizes the practical challenges and solutions, such as frequent communication and proactive conflict resolution.

The tragic example made by interviewee two on the set of *Rust* underscores the importance of proper risk management and stakeholder engagement. Hiring inexperienced crew members to save costs led to a fatal accident. This incident shows the need to ensure that all safety protocols are strictly followed and that stakeholders are trained and informed about potential risks.

## *5.2 Communication Dynamics in Film Production*

The interviews' empirical results give insight into a variety of communication dynamics that are relevant to the film business. As Tonnquist stated, an organization's ability to communicate is critical to the project owners' and other stakeholders' sense of security (2018, p.131). Reaching certain goals in communication for various stakeholders requires a communication strategy. Effective goal-achieving might result from project stakeholders interpreting effective communication. All interviewees realize the difficulties of communicating on a film set because of how fast-paced it is. Interviewees two and four noted that working in the film industry is unpredictable because each day is different. This being said, overcoming these uncertainties requires flexibility and adaptation in communication. For example, film sets attempt to ensure effective communication by everyone on set having a walkie-talkie radio with a headset (Interviewee 1). With headsets all the film crew should feel the sense of security that they can communicate with the entire crew at any time, however, only one interviewee considered this a form of effective communication.

Our interviews revealed that using a combination of formal and informal communication channels is the most effective for risk management. This empirical evidence is consistent with Xia et al. (2018, p.707), who found that diversified communication channels improve project outcomes. This being said, our research extends by showing that in the film industry, informal channels such as messaging or using walkie-talkies to discuss while production is happening are particularly important for quickly addressing emerging issues that were not planned for (Interviewee 2).



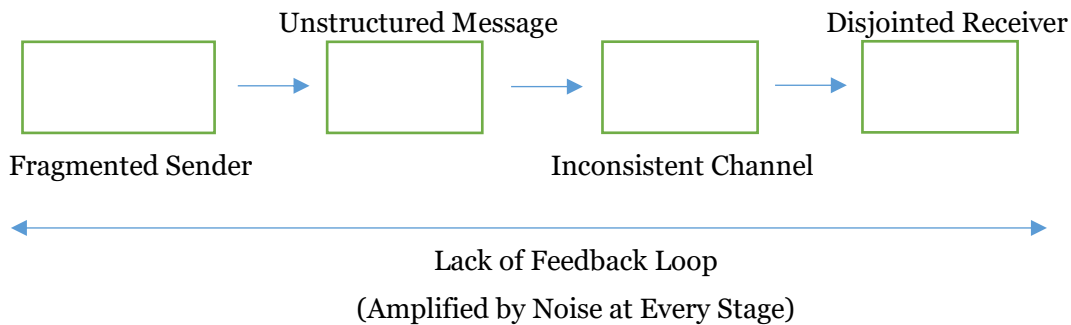
In 2021, a film entitled *Rust* was in the middle of production when one of the actors accidentally fired a loaded gun on set. This led to the gun killing the cinematographer of the film. In our empirical findings, both interviewees two and three bring up this example. One of them claims this incident happened because of miscommunication. The issue happened because someone failed to appropriately inform the actor that he was carrying a loaded gun (Interviewee 3). There was no communication strategy here in a film that should have required various strategies of communication since weapons were involved on set.

### 5.2.1 Communication Model

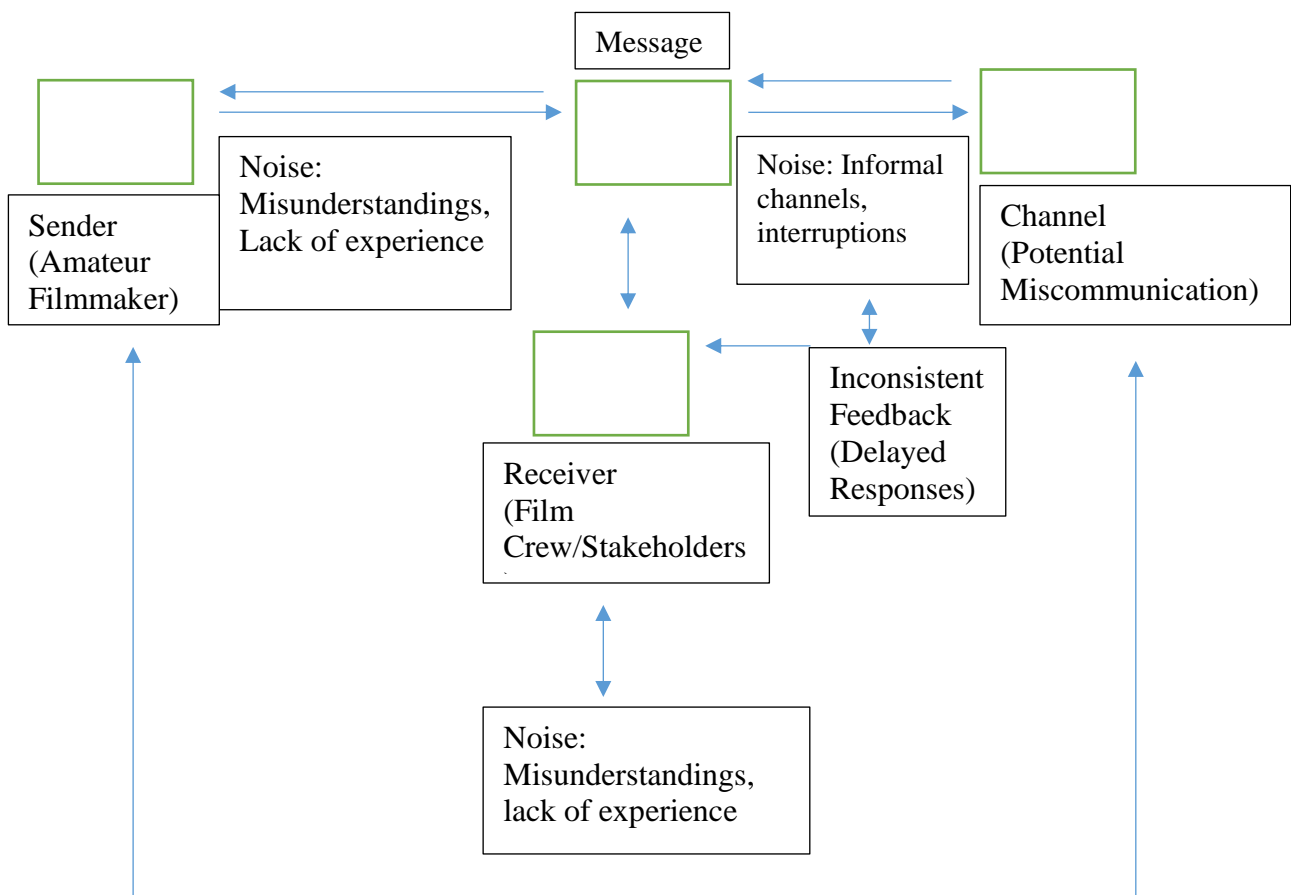
The Shannon-Weaver model is one of the first and most significant communication models (Al-Fedaghi). Effective communication is developed by breaking down communication components using this straightforward communication model. Based on our empirical findings, half of our respondents found that most of the time, stakeholders are afraid of speaking up, especially if they are amateur filmmakers. According to Deszco Magyar, out of the 26,000 students who graduate from film schools each year, just 5% to 10% find work in the film industry (Hubbell, 1991, p. 61). This could support why amateur filmmakers are not communicating at the beginning of their careers. Going back to the example on *Rust*, the cinematographer was quite new in the industry. Most of the team on the film had quit the morning the incident happened because of safety concerns. The cinematographer stayed because she could not afford to lose her job (Interviewee 2). “Clearly, individuals must constantly compare and prove themselves for opportunities” (Jones, 1996, p. 62). Due to the intense competition in the film business, aspiring filmmakers experience being overwhelmed and unworthy, leading them to underestimate their own abilities and fail to advocate for themselves. In a field where making connections with the right people is crucial, many want to leave a good impression from the start. While thinking about their career, one of our respondents elaborated on their early career in film when they felt afraid their career would be jeopardized if they spoke up to top management about an actor pointing a weapon at them (Interviewee 2). These are the types of informal communication that can lead to risks. When used correctly, the Shannon-Weaver model is useful because, in film production, all types of communication are used. With every production being unique, in order to get to the point where the model is helpful for all productions, it needs to be made clear that amateur filmmakers have a voice, and their careers will not be jeopardized if something wrong is said.

The Shannon-Weaver model, often called the “mother of all models,” outlines a communication process that is linear and involves a sender, message, channel, receiver, and feedback. Although this model can be useful for fundamental communication analysis, it ignores the complexities and failures in communication that often occur in amateur

filmmaking, which can lead to significant risks. Below the researchers have created two alternative communication models that highlight the flaws of filmmaker communication and then one more specific for amateur filmmakers' communication strategies and how they lead to risks.



**Figure 5.** *Filmmaker Communication Disruption Model (Murry, 2024)*



**Figure 6.** *Amateur Filmmaker Communication Model (Murry, 2024)*

Figure 6 illustrates the communication flow from the sender (the amateur filmmaker) to the receiver (the film crew/stakeholders), and back again through inconsistent feedback and potential noise. The stages of noise include misunderstandings, lack of experience, informal channels, interruptions, and potential miscommunication.

Amateur filmmakers can reduce many of the risks associated with poor communication by addressing these communication gaps and making sure that there are clear, structured communications, consistent channels, synchronized distribution of information, and robust feedback systems.

### 5.2.2 Risk Communication

“Excellent interpersonal and communication skills are critical because work is coordinated in production meetings, the tasks are ambiguous and highly interdependent, and freelance work requires informal communication networks for identifying future work” (Jones, 1996, p. 63). Due to a shortage of time on site and top management’s primary concern being the film’s budget, safety meetings are not always held (Interviewee 2). This goes against (Jones, 1996) that having good communication is critical for production meetings, meaning meetings should occur as much as possible. By having safety meetings at the beginning of the day on set every day, risk communication can be clear for the duration of the day. According to Lundgren & McMakin (2018, p.4), consensus communication is a risk communication strategy that educates and inspires individuals to work together to determine how the risk will be managed (prevented or decreased). Some individuals might not see risks as clearly as others. As brought up by interviewee three, the creative stakeholders are mainly concerned with shooting the best shot or writing the best script without limits. This being said, interviewee two brings up safety meetings every day on set that are not consistent. By applying consensus communication in safety meetings every day, both the creative and financial stakeholders can discuss risks and solutions. This also allows for less miscommunication on the set of production.

Care communication consists of communication about risks on dangers that already have a way of being managed. Since interviewee two mentions that cars and traffic are some of the most common risks faced, this is a risk that already has a way of being managed during every production. By having the proper emergency services present when filming where there is traffic, this will decrease the risk of accidents but is something that needs to be planned for in pre-production. This is also another form of crisis communication; being prepared with emergency services is the start of good practice for crisis communication.

Appropriate risk response procedures must be put into place following the identification and analysis of project risks in order to manage the risks during project execution (Zou et

al., 2007). Our empirical findings found that productions tend to lack this. During one of our interviews, interviewee two stated that the day of production is essential for identifying risks just as much as during pre-production. This goes against this theory because risk cannot be managed after it has already occurred. It is a threat to leave a risk to be identified in production because then it might be too late (Interviewee 3).

The simplest way to lower a risk is to remove it from project deliverables. When a risk is accepted, it indicates that its severity is low enough that nothing will be done about it until and if it occurs (Zhang & Fan, 2014). With our research, we found this to be true.

Interviewees one and four emphasize throughout their interviews that the more planning and preparation that is done to reduce risks that are known for production, it creates room for mistakes that will inevitably happen. Top management can deal with these mistakes when/if they happen and infer that they cannot affect the entirety of the film by allowing these types of risks in production. This can lead to a more successful production as well as an environment with less conflict throughout filming.

Implementing safety precautions, creating backup plans, increasing resource allocation, and modifying project timelines to account for unforeseen circumstances are all examples of effective risk-reduction techniques (Tonnquist, 2018, p.238). According to our empirical research, these techniques are essential for mitigating risks (Interviewees 1- 5). Our respondents repeatedly emphasized the significance of taking preventative actions, such as implementing safety procedures and creating backup plans (Interviewees 1 and 4). These methods not only help in handling unforeseen circumstances but also contribute to the effective completion of projects and successful outcomes.

Although Alami (2016, p. 70) emphasized the value of transparency in project management, our research shows that in the context of film production, transparency needs to be combined with frequent feedback loops to effectively and timely address stakeholders' concerns. Regular updates and transparent reporting are critical for maintaining trust and alignment among stakeholders (Interviewee 5).

By using these practices during pre-production, it is easier for productions to manage and mitigate potential risks, leading to fewer disruptions and a more cohesive working environment. Our empirical results being consistent with established theories emphasize how important proactive risk management and risk communication are to successful and safe film production outcomes.

### *5.3 Risk Management Strategies in Pre-Production*

During risk identification, most dangers and weaknesses should be managed by the choice of solution and smart planning. This will either completely remove or greatly remove risks (Tonnquist, 2021, p.231). Our empirical findings proved this to be correct as one hundred percent of our respondents stated that pre-production is the most important phase for identifying risks. Especially interview one, even as a young filmmaker, puts great emphasis on planning being the core of a great film. All our interviewees agree that the more planning that is complete before a movie starts production, the more prepared the team is for the unexpected risks to come. As with any project, but especially in the film industry where every day is unpredictable, being as prepared as possible makes room for risks that cannot be planned for pre-production. Every department head goes through a process during pre-production when they read through the script, find anything that would be labeled as a risk, and then make accommodations based on this (Interviewees 2 and 4). Determining the need for stunt doubles for a particular scene, the safety precautions needed while using weapons on set, and any other risks specific to the plot are a few examples.

According to Hillson (2002), proactive risk management techniques are crucial for foreseeing and reducing problems before they become real. Our research demonstrates the importance of careful pre-production planning, which includes location surveillance and in-depth script analysis, in identifying potential risks (Interviewees 1-4).

#### **5.3.1 Risk Response Methods**

Although none of our interviewees mentioned using the mini-risk method, gap analysis, and maxi-risk method for risk analysis, all of our respondents discussed different strategies they completed during preproduction for risk analysis. This was expected as all films are unique. According to Tonnquist, the project owner is committed to the responsibility of deciding what should be done based on risk analysis (2021, p.234). A risk analysis is done for projects with common risks and easily identifiable threats, and it is the director's job in pre-production to implement action plans and hire services accordingly if needed to be prepared. Throughout our empirical findings, we discovered that top management is responsible for risk analysis, but as risks do occur mainly during production, it is the responsibility of everyone on set to point out things that can be considered a threat. We found this especially in interview two. The respondent mentions that early in his career he was a production assistant, a role that is only a low-level team member, but he spoke up to the director about a scene he considered dangerous. The scene was later removed from the

film. Had the interviewee not spoken up about the dangers of this stunt and it ended with unfortunate circumstances, the rest of the film would have been jeopardized.

The opportunities that yield the best results and the risk events that have the greatest impact on the project should be prioritized in an action plan that is developed with methods for accomplishing the best results and managing risks (Tonnquist, 2021, p.236). We learned that top management plans for known risks by assessing what needs time to be established. For example, interviewee four brings up the importance of planning for location. This is one of the largest risks to be dealt with in pre-production because of how much of a delay it can cause in production. This can be things from triple-checking that you have the acceptance and the correct permits to utilize a location. Not completing this, can change the entire schedule of the project, causing many delays and going over budget. As interviewee two mentions, if filming on public streets, plan for this in advance because police will need to be present to guide traffic, crowd control, and in general keep a safe environment. In our empirical data, we also found that many productions will cut safety measures to reduce the budget of the film. As Tonnquist (2021, p.238) explains, there should be a margin in the budget for actions that can reduce risks. Based on our findings, film projects do have a budget for risks, but sometimes top management will find certain risks unnecessary to take financial action on and use to budget toward something else.

### 5.3.2 Contingency Reserves

Using a contingency reserve is a way to minimize the consequences of cost and/or scheduling risk (Tonnquist 2021 p. 238). As Tonnquist (2021, p. 238) explains, there should be a margin in the budget for actions that can reduce risks. Based on our findings, film projects do have a budget for risks, but sometimes top management will find certain risks unnecessary to take financial action on and use the budget toward something else. Our empirical findings reveal several insights into practical applications of contingency reserves, interviewees highlighted that film projects often encounter unpredictable elements such as equipment failure, health issues among stakeholders, and weather changes. These uncertainties require a robust risk management strategy, where contingency reserves play a pivotal role. Interviewee five stressed the importance of careful spending and maintaining reserves to handle inevitable changes in plans due to unforeseen circumstances like weather or illness. This proactive financial planning ensures that projects can adapt without significant disruptions. The use of completion bonds was mentioned as a financial safeguard. Furthermore, the establishment of alternative plans was also mentioned as a way of handling scheduling risks. Another important part of contingency planning is having backup equipment prepared. These findings show that

using contingency reserves to handle cost and scheduling risks is a key part of risk management in the pre-production of film projects. We found that the interviewee's approach to these aspects aligns with the recommendations in current literature.

## 6. Conclusion

Our thesis offers fresh perspectives on risk management in film production, particularly in the pre-production phase. While project risk management has been the subject of earlier research in general, our study provides further insights into the specific risks related to film production and the unique tactics used by top management in this sector.

Throughout this chapter, the conclusions from our study will be presented. We will use this chapter to provide specific responses to the research questions presented in section 1.3. This chapter is also used to reflect upon what further research is needed within this sector.

Following the analysis of all empirical data in conjunction with the theoretical framework, conclusions that address the study's research questions can be made. The goal of our study was to explore the key risk management factors during the pre-production phase of film projects and identify what top management can do to mitigate these risks. We aimed to fill a gap in the current literature by offering practical insights into the methods, techniques, and strategies used in film production risk management. Through interviews with industry professionals and analysis of theoretical frameworks and real-world examples, we focused on these research questions:

1. What are the main risks in film projects, and what actions do top managers take to mitigate them?

Sub Questions:

2. How are risks identified during the pre-production phase of film projects?
3. How do communication and stakeholder engagement help in managing these risks?
4. What are the most common and recommended strategies for risk mitigation?

*6.1 What are the main risks in film projects, and what actions do top managers take to mitigate them?*

Our study found several major risks in film projects, such as financial overruns, location-related issues, safety hazards, and equipment failures. To handle these risks, top management takes various steps focused on planning and preparation. These steps include obtaining necessary permits, setting aside contingency budgets, conducting safety meetings, and hiring experienced crew members. A stark reminder of the importance of proper risk management is the tragic incident on the set of *Rust*, where a cinematographer



was accidentally killed. This incident shows the need for professional handling of hazardous situations and highlights the critical role of safety protocols.

### *6.2 How are risks identified during the pre-production phase of film projects?*

The pre-production phase is most important for spotting and managing risks. Risk identification during pre-production involves collaboration among all stakeholders. We found that the key methods to be script analysis, pre-visualization, budgeting, and location scouting. By engaging stakeholders early and often, project managers can anticipate potential risks and devise strategies to manage them proactively. This proactive approach minimizes the chances of unexpected challenges during production. Our findings show that detailed planning in pre-production significantly aids in identifying and managing risks, ensuring that the production goes as smoothly as possible.

### *6.3 How do communication and stakeholder engagement help in managing these risks?*

Communication and stakeholder engagement are essential for successful risk management in film projects. We found that regular updates, transparent progress reports, and inclusive decision-making processes are key strategies to maintain stakeholder trust and alignment. Furthermore, clear, consistent, and adaptable communication channels are of key importance, given the fast-paced nature of film production. Keeping all stakeholders, from financial backers to creative personnel, informed and involved helps mitigate risks and creates a collaborative environment. Open communication channels and frequent updates can prevent misunderstandings and ensure everyone is working towards the same goals. Compared to previous research, our findings highlight the importance of integrating stakeholder engagement more deeply into risk management practices. While Xia et al. (2018 p.707) discuss the benefits of stakeholder engagement, our empirical evidence emphasizes the practical challenges and solutions, such as frequent communication and proactive conflict resolution. Future research should focus on developing and implementing formal methods for stakeholder identification and prioritization to further improve stakeholder engagement practices in film production.

### *6.4 What are the most common and recommended strategies for risk mitigation?*

Several effective strategies for mitigating risks in film production emerged from our research. The most common and recommended methods we found include:

**Detailed Planning and Preparation:** Extensive planning during pre-production, including script read-throughs, risk assessments, and safety protocols, helps identify and address potential risks early. Planning for various scenarios and developing contingency plans enables production teams to handle unexpected events better.

**Contingency Budgets:** Allocating financial reserves for unforeseen issues ensures the project can continue smoothly despite unexpected challenges. This financial cushion allows for flexibility and the ability to address problems as they arise without risking the entire project.

**Safety Meetings and Training:** Our research found that safety meetings and rehearsals are not always held. Regular safety briefings and training sessions for all crew members help maintain a safe working environment and ensure everyone is aware of their responsibilities. Safety meetings at the start of each shooting day can highlight specific risks and safety measures for that day's activities ensuring the entire crew is aware of any risks that may occur.

**Effective Communication:** Establishing clear communication channels and providing regular updates keep all stakeholders informed and engaged, helping to manage expectations and address concerns quickly. Open communication helps align stakeholders' interests and encourages a collaborative environment where potential risks can be identified and mitigated early.

Our study shows the importance of risk management practices during the pre-production phase of film projects. By focusing on planning, effective communication, and stakeholder engagement, film productions can better navigate the uncertainties of the industry. These practices increase the safety of the production process and contribute to the success and sustainability of film projects. Our research provides valuable insights and practical recommendations for filmmakers and stakeholders, emphasizing the need for a collaborative and well-structured approach to risk management in the film industry. Existing literature often focuses on general project management principles, our research focuses on the unique challenges and risks faced by film projects. By doing so, we provide a specialized framework that can be directly applied by film producers and top management.

### *6.5 Knowledge Contributions and Suggestions for Further Research*

Our research advances the industry by offering a thorough analysis of risk management strategies unique to film project pre-production. This contribution is significant since it offers useful advice, tackles a topic that hasn't been thoroughly studied before, and broadens our knowledge of risk management in the film industry.

Further research that we believe could provide deeper insights into risk management in film projects includes longitudinal studies to track the effectiveness of the proposed risk management strategies over the entire lifecycle of a film project. Conducting comparative studies between different types of film projects (independent vs major studios) could provide insights into how risk management practices vary depending on the scope of the film projects.

It would also be interesting for future research to compare worldwide risk management techniques or examine risk management procedures in a variety of film project genres. This can explore the different risks associated with different genres and which genres contain the most risks during production.

We also found that investigating how emerging technologies, such as AI can be integrated into risk management of film projects could be of interest to research.

As previously stated in our limitations, conducting interviews and research with different regions outside of the United States will also provide a deeper insight into our topic.

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## Appendix

Interview Questions:

### Background

1. *How many years have you been involved in the film industry, and what motivated you to pursue this career? Please tell us about your experience in the industry, but more specifically your experience during pre-production.*
2. *Can you share some of the most challenging projects you've worked on and the risks you faced during pre-production?*
3. *What specific risks stood out as most challenging, and how did you address them?*

### Risk Management in Pre-Production:

4. *In what stage of production do you believe is best for analyzing potential risks that can occur during a film project?*
5. *During pre-production of a film project, how do you approach risk management?*
6. *Can you describe any specific risk assessment methods you use regularly during pre-production?*
7. *What are some common risks you anticipate during pre-production, and how do you prioritize them?*
8. *Can you name an example of how you successfully mitigated high-priority risks in the past?*
9. *Can you name a time when a risk wasn't managed properly during pre-production and how it impacted the project?*
10. *Did you learn any lessons from this and did it impact how you approach risks since then?*

### Stakeholder Engagement:

11. *What are the groups and individuals who affect or are affected by the achievement of the project?*
12. *Do you identify these groups and individuals in the pre-production phase, if so, do you categorize them in some way?*
13. *How do you categorize these groups and why?*
14. *Are there any groups or individuals who might be extra important to the project, and thus need extra attention to mitigate the risk of them leaving the project?*
15. *What do you do to align the different stakeholders' aspirations to reach the project goal?*
16. *Stakeholders might want different results from the project, do you prioritize different stakeholders' goals in some way?*
17. *Which stakeholders have higher priority than others and why?*

18. *How do you allow stakeholders to participate in the process of identifying risks during pre-production? Or is it something they are not involved in?*
19. *What approach do you use to make sure risks are clearly understood by both stakeholders and the production team?*
  - i. *Is it only a contract or more verbal communication?*
20. *What obstacles do you face when integrating stakeholders in the process of risk mitigation?*
  - i. *Do you have any positive or negative examples?*

**Communication and Stakeholder Engagement:**

21. *Do you believe there is a way to ensure effective communication between stakeholders during pre-production?*
22. *Are there any particular communication tools you have found to be most helpful in effective communication?*
23. *Have you ever faced any stakeholder conflict during pre-production? How did you handle it?*