

THE NEXUS BETWEEN EFFECTIVE CRISIS COMMUNICATION AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Effective crisis communication and crisis management are closely connected and essential for organizational resilience during crises. This study analyzed communication and crisis frameworks to assess their roles in resolving crises. The main aim was to explore how these practices interact and support proactive crisis handling. The research addressed the impact and relationship between effective crisis communication and management within organizations. The study examined 196 sources, including co-cited works and 17 communication theories, finding that communication and management are interdependent in managing crises. It highlighted that tailored communication is vital to mitigate crises, emphasizing the need to address communication barriers for organizational stability. The study recommends further research using case studies to address limitations such as reliance on secondary data and possible biases.

Key Words: *Crisis, Effective Crisis Communication, Crisis Management, and Crisis Communication Barrier*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, organizations must navigate complex challenges from diverse external pressures, such as social, political, technological, and legal shifts, along with evolving expectations from stakeholders and investors. To handle potential crises that may arise from these volatile environments, proactive and adaptable strategies are essential. Effective crisis communication plays a central role in such strategies by ensuring accurate, timely information is shared with stakeholders to prevent damage to reputation and trust. Communication also requires quick, responsive actions based on reliable information, especially when engaging stakeholders, including the media, to defuse tensions and prevent further escalation.

This study underscores the importance of transparent and empathetic communication during crises as a foundation for maintaining and strengthening trust. Communication that addresses stakeholder concerns and shares updates openly can reassure all parties involved, reinforcing the organization's commitment to resolving the issue. Studies further suggest that effective communication frameworks incorporate both proactive and reactive strategies to support a crisis response that is thorough and resilient.

An organization's resilience during a crisis largely depends on integrating communication with crisis management structures. Crisis managers often turn to established theories, such as Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) and Image Restoration Theory (IRT), to guide responses that align with both immediate needs and long-term reputational goals. These models emphasize preparedness and adaptability, helping organizations approach crises with a balanced view of short-term resolution and continuous improvement.

Effective crisis management also integrates digital platforms and social media to manage stakeholder relations and address public perception swiftly. A holistic approach, combining internal crisis controls with the strategic management of external perceptions, ensures organizations are equipped to address causes and consequences of crises while maintaining strong, transparent relationships with their audiences.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

A crisis can severely impact an organization's operations and reputation if not properly managed; it could be disruptive and lead to business closure. Therefore, the multifaceted relationship between effective crisis communication and crisis management can determine the ability of organizations to mitigate the crisis and develop organization-wide strategies for proactive crisis monitoring and mitigation approaches. The rise in crisis occurrences highlights the need for better understanding and management practices (Simon-Elorz et al., 2015). When examined further, these dangers have ambiguous structures, and the conventional and usual methods are insufficient to eliminate them since they are problems that are unforeseen and hard to understand. It has become an essential part of organizational life because of adverse environmental conditions and the failure of their management (Civelek et al., 2016). To this end, the research questions addressed the relationship and the impact of effective crisis communication and management on organizational crises.

2.0 REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.1 Crisis Management

Crisis management involves immediate response, recovery, and preparedness efforts to mitigate the impact of crises (Mehrotra et al., 2008). It encompasses anticipating, identifying, and managing potential disasters through preventive and responsive strategies (Diddi & Wei, 2022; Ronez, 2014). Effective crisis management integrates procedures into organizational strategies and involves early prediction, detection, and resolution of crises (Valackiene, 2011; Heath & O'Hair, 2020). This process ensures the identification and management of crises and their impacts (Babatunde, 2022).

2.2 Effective Crisis Communication

Effective crisis communication is used interchangeably with terms like crisis communication and effective communication. This involves transferring information to ensure understanding and action (Touitou, 2020; Coombs, 2009). Organizational success during crises, requires precise, coordinated, and empathetic communication to protect stakeholders and maintain trust (Zakari, 2020; Anderson-Meli & Koshy, 2020). Therefore, open dialogue and timely information sharing are essential strategies for managing crises effectively (Palenchar, 2005; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015; Badu, 2021).

2.3 Communication Barriers in Crisis Management

Communication barriers can hinder effective crisis management. These include technological, organizational, and social obstacles and should be addressed (Fischer et al., 2016).

- *Technological Barriers:* These are integration issues, such as technology acceptance and social media challenges. They can impede information dissemination and decision-making during crises.
- *Organizational Barriers:* These include issues that arise from misunderstandings between organizations due to lack of trust and issues with policies and resources.
- *Social Barriers:* They cover diversity in backgrounds and interpretations that can create communication challenges and affect the clarity and effectiveness of messages.

2.4 Characteristics/Role of Effective Crisis Communication in Crisis Management

Coombs and Holladay (2010) posit that crisis communication is central to managing crises. Successful crisis management relies heavily on effective communication, which influences how emergency and recovery plans are developed (Pinta, 2022). Studies by Jin et al. (2022) show that trustworthy sources significantly impact the public with information during crises, as seen during the 2014 Ebola outbreak. Transparency and strategic communication are vital to boosting cooperation among parties and enhancing effectiveness (Yan, 2006). Zemke (2024) reinforces that organizations can effectively harness communication to navigate crises. This is shown in Beehive's roadmap (Ready, Respond, Recover, Restore) on strategic communication that can guide organizations through crises.

Key strategies linking crisis communication and management include:

- *Preventive Communication:* Preparation for different and varied crises can help manage overcomes more effectively (Gilpin & Murphy, 2009; Frandsen & Johansen, 2016; Matias & Cardoso, 2023).
- *Reactive Communication:* Theories like Image Restoration (Benoit, 1995) and Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) (Coombs, 1995) provide frameworks for responding to crises based on their characteristics.

2.5 Interdependence/Interplay Between Crisis Management and Effective Crisis Communication

Communication is essential for crisis management, offering clarity and direction during uncertain times. Effective crisis communication stabilizes organizations, builds trust, and engages stakeholders. Studies highlight that communication is integral to team performance and organizational operations (McKinney et al., 2004). Crisis communication has been shaped by high-impact crises such as 9/11, SARS, and COVID-19 (Avraham & Beirman, 2023; Watkins & Walker, 2021). The Beehive's communication roadmap emphasizes continuous strategic communication throughout a crisis to maintain and restore trust.

2.6 Theories and Strategies in Crisis Management and Effective Crisis Communication

Several theories purported to addressing crisis management are:

- *Preventive Communication*: Prepares organizations for crises by creating networks to gather risk-related information (Coombs, 1999).
- *Reactive Communication*: Includes Image Restoration Theory (Benoit, 1995) and SCCT (Coombs, 1995), which suggest strategies based on the crisis type and responsibility.
- *Gow's Framework*: Outlines phases of crisis communication, Preparedness, and Recovery with specific communication strategies (Fischer et al., 2016).

2.7 Gaps in Existing Theories

While numerous studies on crisis communication have been conducted, challenges remain. Existing literature often exhibits biases and lacks comprehensive coverage of crisis characteristics. Recent works suggest a need for broader literature reviews and bibliometric analyses to address intellectual, social, and conceptual structure gaps (Yuan et al., 2015; Lim et al., 2022; Mukherjee et al., 2022).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative approach, specifically an instrumental and descriptive case study. This involves an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon to understand the issue better. The research methodology includes:

- *Research Design*: Descriptive and instrumental case study.
- *Data Collection*: This method utilized secondary data from various sources, including journals, books, blogs, and internet sources. Data were gathered from over 500 pieces of literature and narrowed down to 196 relevant works, including 17 theories and frameworks.

- **Data Analysis:** Comprehensive inspection and transformation of data from various sources to support conclusions and decision-making. Techniques from Crabtree and Nehme (2023) were used to analyze the data about the research questions.

3.1 Research Questions

The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** What is the existing literature on effective crisis communication and crisis management, and what are the opportunities and future possibilities in this field?
- **RQ2:** What are the most effective crisis communication strategies for responding to crises?
- **RQ3:** How do communication barriers impact the effectiveness of crisis communication in managing various crises?

Analysis of Data

RQ1: Involved an extensive literature review on effective crisis communication and crisis management, assessing how these concepts can be integrated within organizations and identifying areas for improvement in past reviews. Overall, the research methodology was designed to thoroughly understand the interplay between crisis communication and crisis management, leveraging a qualitative approach to address the research questions.

Table 1a: Prevalent Literature on Crisis Communication and Crisis Management:

ature	or/Year
nizational effectiveness in crisis management ess.	mbs, 2015).
erm/terminology Crisis.	ander, 1993), (Coombs,) (Quarantelli, 2001);(Rike,);(Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1993);(Touitou,); (Zakari, 2020) and (Zhiyuan et al.,).
s classifications.	ck, 2016);(Karam, 2018); (Rosenthal, et al.,) and (Wobodo, et al., 2020).
s disorder.	vo&Asawo, 2018); (Koontz & Wehrich,

); and(Wobodo&Wobodo 2019).
	management and the impact of possible crises.	Li & Wei, 2022) and Mehrotra et. al. (2019).
	prevention.	Atunde, 2022); (Kazaza, 2015); (Mikušová, 2020); (Ronez, 2014); (Sahin et al., 2019); (Shrivastava et al., 1988) and Uckiene, 2011).
	management and organizational strategy.	Šťák, 2013); (Heath & O'Hair, 2020); (Rathova, 2019); (Mikusova, 2020); (Shrivastava & Mitroff 1987) & (Spillan, 2016).
	Effective communication/Effective crisis communication.	Person-Meli & Koshy, 2020); (Coombs, 2014); (Touitou, 2020); and(Zakari, 2020).
	communication, stakeholders, and organization expectations.	et al., 2016) and (Coombs, 2014).
	Effective strategies of communication with staff and stakeholders during a crisis.	Li, 2021);(Palenchar, 2005);(Sellnow & Thacker, 2013);(Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015) and (Zakari, 2020).
	Communication barriers in managing crisis.	Li et al., 2014);(Bharosa et al., 2010);(Coombs, 2007);(Day et al., 2002);(Fischer et al., 2016);(Gomez & Turoff, 2015); (Gonzalez,2009); (Manoj & Baker, 2010);(Oh et al., 2015);(Okoye, 2004);(Pan et al., 2012), and (Zhou et al., 2013).
	Effective Crisis Communication in Crisis Management.	Coombs, 2015);(Coombs & Holladay, 2010);(Frandsen & Johansen, 2016); Gilpin & Priddy, 2009); (Jin, et al., 2022);(Jonker, 2021);(Matias & Cardoso, 2023); (Mendes & Pereira, 2006);(Pinta, 2022); (Yan, 2006)& (Zakari, 2024)
	Communication Response Strategies.	Spillan, Lariscy, Kim, and Hocke (2010). Weick (1995, 1997), and Coombs (1995, 1998, 2000, 2014, 2015).
	Interplay between Crisis Management & Effective Communication.	Li & Beirman,2022); (Badu et al., 2023); (Coombs, 2021); (Lastelica et al., 2023); (Levine et al., 2004);(Valackiene, 2010);(Watkins & Walker, 2021) and (Zemke, 2011).
	Challenges and Strategies in Crisis Management and Communication.	Li et al., 2010); (Ahmed, 2011); Anderson et al., 2010); Bharosa and Janssen (2010); (Duncan

	tive Crisis Communication.	ulver, 2020);(Gerbner, 2019); (Gosling & tier, 2018); (Graziano & Gauthier, 2018); bert & Park, 2019);(Kaewkitipong et al.,); (Kasanah, 2019); (McCombs et al.,); (Miller, 2020); (Myers, 2020); (Nwabueze konkwo, 2018); (Othman & Yusoff, 2020). on, 2021);(Rahim & Katz, 2020);(Rodić& Ć, 2021); (Santoso &Negoro, 2019); (Stella Toomey, 2017); (Zahran et al., 2010);and ke, 2024).
	In Existing Theories.	& Cheng 2010); (Benoit1995, 1997); mbs2021); (Ha & Boynton 2014); er2018); Lim et al., 2022); (Mitroff et 188);(Moreno-Fernández& Fuentes-2019); (Mukherjee et al., 2022); n etal., 2015); (Sarmiento & Poblete,); (Seeger et al., 2016); (Upadhyay& lhyay, 2023);(Zakiri, 2020); (Zhao, 2020) Zurro-Antónet al., 2021).

Table 1b: Gaps in the literature in Crisis Communication and Crisis Management:

ature	or (s)		mmendation
ble s emerging in communication several new sub- s.	mbs, 2010, 2021); et al.,);(Mukherjee et al.,) and(Yuan et al.,).	creates many enges for rchers and scholars e field.	er studies should be ucted to harmonize etermine the most cations in relevant s.
tiveness of crisis munication ries.	ger et al.,);(Zhao, 2020) Zupic&Čater, 2015).	ective biases in some es.	er studies in this will provide in-depth rage.
s communication	dhyay and lhyay, 2023)	nal analysis required explore and rstand communication rch activity.	e isa need to carry a rational analysis of communication.
ue nature of each .	bit, 1995, 1997) and mbs, 1995, 1998,	it and Coombs me that the	in-depth study is ed to find a unique

).	cular strategy to ond to a crisis nds on its acteristics.	egy that can rallybe applied in s.
	Management	off et. al, 1988);and n et. al, 2015).	practice, crisis agement does not to a crisis solution;it only be managed.	er studies are ired.
	Prevention	ri, 2020).	nability of studies in communication to ent crises in the short ng term.	er studies are ired.
	ature Review	and Cheng, 2010); and Boynton,);(Sarmiento & ete, 2021); (Moreno- ández & Fuentes- 2019) and (Zurro- n, et al., 2021).	comprehensive ture review is red in social, ectual, and eptual structures the thematic tion in the field of communication.	ometric analysis is ired to capture ture prehensively and to its thematic tion.

Research Question 1: Explored prevalent literature and future opportunities in the field. Tables 1a and 1b analyze this literature. Table 1a, details various studies on effective crisis communication and crisis management, including authors and publication years. Table 1b identifies gaps in the current literature and proposes recommendations to address these gaps, highlighting opportunities for future research.

RQ 2: This question identified the most effective crisis communication response strategies. The review examines strategies used in crises and analyzes their effectiveness and applicability. This summary highlights the comprehensive literature review and analysis to answer these research questions, contributing to a deeper understanding of crisis communication and management.

Table 2: Crisis Communication Response Strategies

	ry/Strategy	or	onse Strategy
	entive munication.	dsen & Johansen, 2016) in & Murphy, 2009); and	aration is easier to control and come since no two crises are alike.

		as & Cardoso, 2023).	
	itive Communication	y, et al., 2010).	based on two predominant retical models regarding crisis munication response strategies (T & Image Restoration theories).
	e Restoration Theory	pit,1995, 1997).	cuses on message options. The y offers five broad categories of e restoration strategies and nts that seek to respond to ts.
	tional Crisis munication Theory (T).	mb,1995, 1998, 2009).	ssumes that using a particular egy to respond to a crisis depends s characteristics. The SCCT argues the organization should choose rent response strategies nding on its responsibility.
	tribution Theory.	mb,2004, 2007).	ifies individualattribution of es to events based on the degree sponsibility.
	Phases of Crisis agement: itigation Phase.	y (2007), cited in Fischer l. (2016); (Guion et al. 7); (Jorden-Meier, 2011); Zahran et al., 2010).	mitigation phase is communication een and within organizations, arily concernedwith disseminating mation to minimize impact.
	eparedness Phase.	o et al. 2010); (Ahmed,); (Bharosa & Janssen,); (Gonzalez, 2008); han, 2014); (Meesters& de Walle, 2014); (Raman , 2006); (Van Gorp et al.,) and (Yoon et al., 2008).	mation is required to prepare for is;guidelinesand a comprehensive munication plan.
	onse Phase.	y (2007), cited in (Fischer , 2016).	phase includes priorities for a onse, especially regular munication strategies.
	very Phase.	mbie & Sankar,);Doerfel et al, 2010)	nasis should be on the importance information sharing between

		Kaewkitipong et al.,)	nizations during crisis recovery to dinate activities and address tasks.
	ive's business nuity and munication roadmap.	ke, 2024).	Ready, Respond, Recover, and ore helps leaders effectively use egic communication in crisis agement to lead through the rtainty of a crisis and toward a essful future.
	ctive, Reactive, and ctive Strategy	ides & Pereira, (2006), in Matias and Cardoso, 3).	s management as an integrated ess can be developed in three : proactive, reactive, and reflective.
	munication Theory	Scudder - (Ellis, 2019).	ommunication tool employed by agement to drive an organization tively through messages from one an being and the environment.
	tional Leadership ry (SLT)	ey & Blanchard, - nah, 2019); (Othman Yusoff, 2020); (Miller,);(Myers, 2020); (Rodić& é, 2021); (Santoso goro, &(Wikström, 2019).	s of leadership change based on ommunication strategies to age challenges and potential crisis mstances effectively.
	otive Structuration ry (AST)	rdine DeSanctis and hall Scott Poole adopted ony Giddens' Theory - , 2017).	is based on using communication tures to create and determine le's interactions for a specific ve.
	ada-setting theory	can & Culver, 2020) and ombs et al., 2018).	phasizes the use of mass media to ess a problem and its effect on the c's thoughts and opinions. It als the impact of technology, a and internet in online munication.
	munication mmodation Theory)	ard Giles -(Holbert & 2019).	framework for interpersonal and group communication that helps nizations adjust their munication based on situations people in line with three adaption egies of convergence,

			tenance, and divergence.
	vation Theory	ge Gerbner –(Gerbner,) and (Graziano & hier, 2018).	related to the influence of regular a exposure on people's attitudes behaviours.
	Negotiation Theory	a Ting-Toomey, 2017) Rahim & Katz, 2020).	theory suggests that face or self- e in communicating with others ersally pervades cultures.
	ing Theory	g Goffman - (Gosling & tier, 2018).	lects how the audience interprets is influenced by specific media or mation.
	odermic Needle ry	erson, 2021); vell,1927) and bueze &Okonkwo,).	based on the influence of the a on information transmission in tions.

Research Question 2: The study investigated seventeen prominent theories and strategies related to crisis communication and crisis management. These theories and strategies were analyzed and summarized in Table 2a, which includes details on the proponents and perspectives of various authors. The table highlights the effectiveness of each theory or strategy based on factors such as applicability, usage, acceptance, and flexibility. The analysis identifies the most effective approaches for different types of crises.

RQ 3: Examined the impact of communication barriers on effective crisis communication. Table 3 presents an overview of communication barriers and effective strategies in crisis management, focusing on how these barriers affect communication effectiveness in various crises.

Table 3: Communication Barriers and Effective Communication Strategies in Crisis Management:

Communication Barrier	Effect on Effective Communication
Technological Barriers	These barriers include the different uses of technology, which are vital during crisis response and recovery. However, crisis responders' non-acceptance can lead to a bottleneck in information dissemination in post-crisis phases. The literature identifies that

		<p>l media in crisis management can also titute problems due to the high potential of or mills during the response phase,which fere with decision-making and affect mation and reliability. (Oh et al. 2015; Zhou et al.).</p>
	<p>izational Barriers</p>	<p>occurs in communication between and within response and during the post-crisis phases due lack of understanding of rules, awareness or r organizations, network-related communication ers, and trust between organizations. (Allen et al.);(Bharosa et al., 2010);(Gomez and Turoff, 2007) Pan et al., 2012).</p>
	<p>al Barriers</p>	<p>is the diversity in different nationalities, cities, cultures, political views, religions, or ogies. If communication does not meet the irements of the situation, it creates a er.Others are interpretation of the message by receiver, prevalence of different resources, rts with incorrect or insufficient information, and e to coordinate exchange and integration by icting interpretations of data.(Bui et al.,);(Day et al., 2009); (Gonzalez, 2009) and (Hale et 005).</p>

Research Question 3 investigated the relationship between communication barriers and the effectiveness of crisis communication in managing diverse crises. The study analyzed three key crisis barriers and their impact on communication effectiveness to guide businesses in mitigating potential adverse effects.

4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS/RESULTS

4.1 Research Question 1: The study reviewed 196 pieces of literature and 17 theories/frameworks on crisis communication and crisis management. Table 1a highlights that most studies focus on crisis resolution through established theories by Coombs, Benoit, Jordan-Meier, and Zamke. Table 1b identifies gaps in the literature and provides recommendations for future research, emphasizing that communication remains the most effective tool for addressing crises. Recommendations include the

need for harmonization of theories and the use of bibliometric and thematic analyses in future studies.

4.2 Research Question 2: This question evaluated the effectiveness of various crisis communication response strategies by examining 17 theories and strategies listed in Table 2a. The study found that the effectiveness of these strategies varies depending on the specifics of the crisis. The appropriate response strategy is determined based on the nature of the crisis, though most strategies are communication-focused.

4.3 Research Question 3: Table 3a assessed the impact of communication barriers on effective crisis communication. It reviewed three significant technological, organizational, and social barriers, highlighting their negative impact on crisis management. The study emphasized that addressing these barriers is crucial, as they pose significant challenges to organizational operations.

5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

5.1 Discussions: The study utilized a descriptive case study, qualitative research methodology, and instrumental case study approach to analyze 196 pieces of literature and 17 theories on crisis communication and management. The findings highlight the significant relationship between crisis communication and management, with communication emerging as a vital tool for navigating crises.

The study found that most literature focuses on resolving crises through established theories such as Coombs' SCCT theory, Benoit's Image Restoration Theory, Jordan-Meier's Four Phases of Crisis Management, and other notable frameworks. These theories are applied in various contexts, but no single strategy fits all crises. Recommendations for future research include addressing gaps through rational and bibliometric analyses and harmonizing existing studies.

The analysis of 17 theories and strategies revealed that the effectiveness of crisis communication responses depends on the specific nature of the crisis. Organizations often tailor their strategy based on applicable theories. The study identified significant technological, organizational, and social barriers that hinder effective crisis communication. These barriers negatively impact crisis management and must be addressed to ensure smooth organizational operations.

Effective communication is crucial for managing and preventing crises and influencing public and stakeholder decisions. Lipshitz and Strauss (1997) posit that poor communication can exacerbate crises.

5.2 Conclusion: The chapter examines the relationship between crisis communication and management, emphasizing that effective communication drives successful crisis management. Despite lacking a universally applicable strategy, organizations can develop tailored communication strategies based on relevant theories. The chapter also identified the impact of communication barriers and emphasized the need for further studies to address gaps and enhance understanding in the field.

The review highlights the critical role of crisis communication in managing crises. Effective communication is essential throughout all stages of a crisis and is integral to building and maintaining trust. Theories and strategies from the past two decades, mainly those developed during recent crises, offer valuable insights. However, gaps in the literature indicate a need for more comprehensive studies to understand and improve crisis communication practices. Further research is recommended to address these gaps and develop more robust crisis management strategies.

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