



Digital Crisis Communication and Organisational Resilience in Nigeria: Analysis of Stakeholder Engagement and Reputation Recovery

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Abstract: *This paper examines digital crisis communication and organisational resilience in Nigeria, with particular attention to stakeholder engagement and reputation recovery. The rapid expansion of social media and digital communication platforms has transformed crisis management by increasing the speed, visibility, and interactivity of organisational crises. Using secondary data obtained from existing scholarly literature, published research, books, institutional reports, and documented cases of organisational crisis communication, the study critically analyses how Nigerian organisations respond to crises in digitally mediated environments. Guided by Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), the study explores the relationship between crisis response strategies, stakeholder engagement, organisational reputation, and resilience. The analysis indicates that effective digital crisis communication is characterised by timeliness, transparency, accountability, empathy, consistency, and continuous stakeholder engagement. It further demonstrates that organisations that actively monitor digital conversations, provide accurate and timely information, acknowledge stakeholder concerns, and adopt response strategies that correspond with perceived crisis responsibility are better positioned to minimise reputational damage and recover stakeholder trust. Conversely, delayed responses, defensive communication, inconsistent messaging, and inadequate engagement may intensify misinformation, public backlash, and reputational decline. The study concludes that digital crisis communication should be integrated into organisational resilience frameworks and strategic public relations planning in Nigeria. It recommends the development of proactive digital crisis protocols, investment in digital listening and analytics capabilities, continuous stakeholder engagement, ethical and transparent communication, and post-crisis learning mechanisms to strengthen organisational resilience and support sustainable reputation recovery.*

Keywords: Digital crisis communication; Organisational resilience; Stakeholder engagement; Reputation recovery; Social media

I. Introduction

Digital transformation has increased both the importance and complexity of crisis communication. Social media platforms like Twitter (now X), Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram serve as essential arenas where crises are amplified and addressed. These platforms allow stakeholders, such as customers, journalists, activists, and competitors, to share unfiltered, real-time content that can influence public perception even before organizations have a chance to respond (Liu, Fraustino, & Jin, 2023). This fast-paced, decentralized communication environment decreases organizational control over messages, emphasizing the need for proactive and transparent communication

1.1 Strategies (Yar'Adua et al., 2023)

The acceleration of crisis communication timelines is not just theoretical. Several case studies clearly demonstrate how digital platforms have transformed the way public relations crises are managed. A well-known example in crisis communication is the 1982 Tylenol cyanide poisoning incident in the United States. Johnson & Johnson's response to the crisis, focusing on consumer safety, transparency, and quick action, was mainly communicated through traditional media such as newspapers and televised press conferences (Fearn-Banks, 2018). Despite technological limitations at the time, the company's strategic decisions helped restore trust and continue to be studied as best practices in public relations courses (Aondover & Ademosu, 2025).

However, when you compare this to more recent incidents in the digital age, the contrast is clear. In 2017, United Airlines faced massive public backlash after a video surfaced showing a passenger being forcibly removed from an overbooked flight. The footage, recorded by fellow passengers on their smartphones, went viral within hours, sparking worldwide outrage and nearly instantly damaging the airline's reputation (Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2020). Unlike in the Tylenol case, United Airlines had little time to craft the narrative or provide a calm response. Instead, the company's delayed and defensive reaction made public opinion worse and showed how a slow or poorly thought-out response can worsen a crisis in the digital age (Obasi & Msughter, 2023).

Another instructive example is BP's handling of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Although the company faced an environmental disaster of historic proportions, its public communication was widely criticized for being evasive, inconsistent, and lacking empathy. These shortcomings were magnified by real-time digital coverage, including livestreams of the oil gushing into the Gulf of Mexico, social media backlash, and satirical attacks, all of which compounded the reputational harm (Coombs & Holladay, 2022). The prolonged and visible nature of the crisis demonstrated how digital media has heightened public scrutiny and diminished the window for error in organizational messaging (Aondover et al., 2025).

The growing influence of digital media on crisis communication is equally evident in Nigeria, where increased internet penetration and widespread use of social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok have transformed the relationship between organizations and their stakeholders. Nigerian organizations are increasingly expected to provide immediate, transparent, and consistent responses during crises, as information now spreads rapidly through digital channels. Delayed or poorly managed responses often attract public criticism, damage organizational reputation, and reduce stakeholder trust. Consequently, digital crisis communication has become an essential component of organizational reputation management in Nigeria (Nwosu & Wilson, 2022).

Several Nigerian organizations demonstrate the importance of effective digital crisis communication. Access Bank Plc and Guaranty Trust Bank (GTBank) frequently use their official social media platforms to address customer complaints arising from electronic banking failures and service disruptions by providing timely updates and engaging directly with customers. Similarly, MTN Nigeria has relied on digital communication to manage crises relating to network outages and regulatory issues, while Air Peace has responded to public concerns over flight delays and cancellations through social media and official online statements. Government institutions such as the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) and the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd.) have also utilized digital platforms to communicate during public health emergencies and fuel

supply challenges, demonstrating that effective online crisis communication has become indispensable for maintaining public confidence and organizational credibility in the Nigerian context (Mohammed et al., 2025).

The implications of these developments are significant. Organizations can no longer see crisis communication as just an occasional or secondary role. Instead, it must be fully incorporated into strategic planning and digital media management. Effective crisis communication now involves real-time monitoring of online conversations, quick sharing of accurate and compassionate messages, and ongoing engagement with stakeholders through multiple digital channels (Veil, Sellnow & Petrun Sayers, 2021). It also requires that communication professionals be trained in both media literacy and digital analytics to gauge public sentiment and respond effectively.

Moreover, the concept of virality has added another layer of complexity to crisis communication. A single tweet, video, or blog post can ignite global attention within minutes, especially when emotional or controversial content is involved. For instance, companies such as Starbucks, H&M, and Dove have all faced social media crises sparked by advertising perceived as racially insensitive. These incidents show that even well-intentioned messages can backfire in the court of public opinion, which is now largely adjudicated online (Lee & Hong, 2022). The viral nature of digital crises implies that organizations must be culturally aware, socially sensitive, and digitally savvy to preempt or contain reputational threats (Maradun et al., 2021).

On a more optimistic note, digital tools also present unique opportunities for crisis communication. When used effectively, platforms like YouTube, Instagram Live, or X can humanize organizations, communicate transparency, and foster goodwill. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, several companies, including Zoom and Shopify, received praise for their timely updates, customer support, and dedication to employee safety, all delivered through digital platforms. These efforts not only eased public concerns but also boosted brand loyalty during challenging times (Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2021).

Onyejelem et al., (2025) observed that the digital transformation of crisis communication is both a challenge and an opportunity. The speed, reach, and interactivity of digital media have fundamentally changed the power dynamics in crisis situations. Organizations now operate in a landscape where public perception can be influenced before they even speak, and where silence or missteps are quickly punished. Therefore, mastering the tools and principles of digital crisis communication is no longer optional, it is crucial for organizational resilience and credibility in the 21st century (Saint et al., 2024).

The widespread adoption of digital media has fundamentally transformed crisis communication by enabling organizations to communicate with stakeholders instantly during crises. In today's digital environment, organizations are expected to provide timely, transparent, and accurate information through online platforms to minimize uncertainty, maintain public trust, and protect their reputations. Effective digital crisis communication should involve prompt responses, continuous stakeholder engagement, and proactive management of misinformation (Vitalis et al., 2025).

However, despite these expectations, many organizations continue to experience significant challenges in managing crises through digital platforms. Delayed responses, inconsistent messaging, inadequate stakeholder engagement, and the rapid spread of

misinformation often intensify crises rather than contain them. Studies have shown that the public increasingly expects organizations to respond quickly to online controversies, yet many fail to meet these expectations, resulting in reputational damage and loss of stakeholder confidence (Pew Research Center, 2021; World Economic Forum, 2023).

The situation is more pronounced in developing countries such as Nigeria, where many organizations contend with poor digital infrastructure, limited technological resources, inadequate digital communication expertise, and low digital literacy among segments of the population (Adeleke, 2023). Although digital communication platforms are widely used by Nigerian organizations, there remains limited empirical evidence on how effectively these organizations adapt their crisis communication strategies to the demands of the digital environment and the challenges they encounter in doing so. It is this gap in knowledge that necessitates the present study.

II. Review of Literature

Crisis communication has been analyzed through various theories that provide frameworks for understanding how organizations should respond during crises. In this context, Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) was employed. The theory was developed by W. Timothy Coombs (2007), offers a strategic framework for understanding how organizations should respond to crises based on stakeholders' attributions of responsibility (Vitalis et al., 2025). The main idea of SCCT is that the success of crisis communication depends on the type of crisis and how much the organization is seen as at fault. SCCT identifies three main types of crises: victim, accidental, and preventable. Victim crises, such as natural disasters, product tampering, or terrorism, usually involve low attribution of responsibility to the organization. Accidental crises, like equipment failure or technical errors, involve moderate blame. Preventable crises, such as unethical actions, negligence, or human error, involve high responsibility and call for a more apologetic and corrective response (Coombs, 2022).

SCCT recommends varying response strategies based on this typology. For victim crises, a sympathy-based approach, like expressing concern and sharing information, is enough. In accidental crises, organizations should combine sympathy with explanations or justifications. For preventable crises, however, organizations must accept full accountability by issuing apologies, taking corrective actions, and sometimes providing compensation to those affected (Coombs & Holladay, 2022). The theory also highlights the importance of prior reputation and crisis history as key factors; organizations with a history of crises or a negative reputation may face tougher judgment, necessitating stronger response strategies.

SCCT has been widely used in corporate, government, and non-profit settings. For example, during the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine clotting scare, the company used an SCCT-based strategy by pausing distribution and quickly addressing public safety concerns, framing itself as a victim of unforeseen medical effects (Liu et al., 2023). SCCT remains a key theory because it systematically connects crisis type, perceived blame, and specific communication responses, providing a flexible yet organized approach to crisis management in both traditional and digital media.

2.1 Concept of Crisis Communication in Public Relations

Crisis communication refers to the strategic management of information flow between an organization and its stakeholders during periods of uncertainty, threat, or reputational risk.

In the 21st century, crisis communication has evolved beyond reactive messaging to a proactive, strategic function embedded within public relations practice. According to Coombs (2015), crisis communication involves “the collection, processing, and dissemination of information required to address a crisis situation” (p. 20). It is not merely about damage control but about preserving organizational legitimacy and stakeholder trust.

Modern crisis communication theory emphasizes reputation protection as central to public relations. Ulmer, Sellnow, and Seeger (2018) argue that crisis communication is grounded in organizational ethics, transparency, and responsiveness. They note that organizations that adopt openness and accountability during crises tend to recover more quickly and maintain long-term credibility (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024b).

Aondover et al., (2022) state that the rise of digital communication has further reshaped crisis response strategies. Social media has created a dynamic environment where crises unfold rapidly and publicly. Jin, Liu, and Austin (2014) explain that digital platforms amplify crisis visibility and accelerate public reaction, requiring organizations to engage in real-time communication. Consequently, crisis communication is now viewed as an ongoing relational process rather than a one-time event.

Additionally, crisis communication aligns with public relations’ broader goal of managing mutually beneficial relationships. As Heath (2010) contends, effective crisis management depends on pre-existing stakeholder relationships. Organizations that have cultivated goodwill prior to a crisis are better positioned to withstand reputational threats. Thus, crisis communication in contemporary public relations represents a strategic, ethical, and relationship-centered practice essential for organizational survival in volatile communication environments.

III. Research Methods

3.1 Evolution of Crisis Communication Theory

Crisis communication theory has developed significantly in the 21st century, moving from image restoration frameworks to more sophisticated attribution-based and stakeholder-centered models. One of the most influential modern frameworks is Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), developed by Coombs (2007, 2015). SCCT argues that organizational response strategies should be contingent upon stakeholders’ perceptions of crisis responsibility. When responsibility is high, accommodative strategies such as apology and compensation are recommended; when low, defensive strategies may suffice.

Building on attribution theory, SCCT emphasizes that public perceptions determine reputational damage more than the objective facts of the crisis. Coombs (2015) demonstrates that mismatched responses, such as denial during preventable crises, intensify reputational harm. Another influential framework is Image Repair Theory, updated in contemporary scholarship by Benoit (2015). Although originally conceptualized earlier, its 21st-century applications highlight digital media’s role in shaping public narratives. Benoit maintains that organizations employ strategies such as denial, evasion of responsibility, corrective action, and mortification to restore image. More recent developments include the Integrated Crisis Mapping Model (ICM), proposed by Jin et al. (2014), which incorporates stakeholder emotions into crisis response strategies. This model argues that fear, anger, and sadness influence public expectations and engagement patterns during crises.

Additionally, scholars such as Sellnow and Seeger (2013) have emphasized risk communication integration, advocating for preparedness communication before crises occur. This reflects a paradigm shift from reactive management to resilience-based communication models. Overall, the evolution of crisis communication theory reflects increasing sophistication, contextual sensitivity, and recognition of digital stakeholder dynamics.

3.2 Organizational Response Frameworks

Organizational response refers to the structured communication strategies deployed to mitigate reputational and operational damage during crises. Modern scholarship identifies three primary response categories: defensive, accommodative, and rebuilding strategies (Coombs, 2015). Defensive strategies include denial, scapegoating, or shifting blame. While these may protect organizations in victim crises, they are risky in preventable crises. Accommodative strategies, such as apology, compensation, and corrective action, demonstrate accountability and are associated with positive stakeholder reactions (Kim & Liu, 2012).

Transparency has become a defining characteristic of effective crisis response. According to Rawlins (2008), transparency involves providing accurate, timely, and accessible information. In digital crises, delayed responses can be interpreted as concealment. Therefore, immediate acknowledgment, even before full information is available, is considered best practice. Organizational learning is also central to response frameworks. Bundy, Pfarrer, Short, and Coombs (2017) argue that effective crisis response involves post-crisis evaluation and institutional reform to prevent recurrence. They emphasize that resilience depends on adaptive learning mechanisms.

Furthermore, stakeholder theory informs modern response strategies. Freeman, Harrison, and Zyglidopoulos (2018) assert that organizations must prioritize communication with affected stakeholders rather than focusing solely on media narratives. This approach strengthens relational trust and mitigates backlash. In sum, contemporary organizational response frameworks emphasize accountability, transparency, stakeholder engagement, and adaptive learning.

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1 Role of Social Media in Crisis Communication

The emergence of social media has fundamentally transformed crisis communication practices. Platforms such as Twitter (X), Facebook, and Instagram have shifted power dynamics from organizations to publics. According to Austin, Liu, and Jin (2012), social media serve as both crisis information sources and arenas for public discourse. Digital platforms accelerate crisis diffusion. Schultz, Utz, and Göritz (2011) found that social media crises spread more rapidly and generate stronger emotional responses compared to traditional media crises. This necessitates continuous monitoring and real-time engagement (Hile et al., 2023). Moreover, dialogic communication has become essential. Kent and Taylor (2016) argue that organizations must move beyond one-way messaging to interactive engagement. Stakeholders expect direct responses, not generic statements. Research also indicates that social media apologies can mitigate reputational damage when perceived as sincere (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014). However, poorly crafted responses may trigger backlash or viral criticism.

Importantly, digital environments require crisis preparedness. Coombs and Holladay (2012) recommend developing social media crisis protocols before crises emerge. Proactive digital listening tools and crisis simulations enhance responsiveness. Thus, social media has

redefined crisis communication as immediate, interactive, and highly visible, requiring strategic agility from organizations (Kurfi et al., 2021).

4.2 Stakeholder Engagement in Crisis

Stakeholder engagement constitutes a foundational pillar of effective crisis communication. During organizational crises, stakeholders, including employees, customers, investors, regulators, host communities, and the media, become critical actors whose perceptions significantly influence the trajectory and outcome of the crisis. According to Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), developed by W. Timothy Coombs, organizations must tailor their communication strategies to stakeholder attributions of responsibility in order to protect reputational assets. Effective engagement requires understanding stakeholder expectations, levels of involvement, and informational needs.

Stakeholder theory, associated with R. Edward Freeman, emphasizes that organizations do not operate in isolation but within a network of relationships. In crisis contexts, this network becomes highly sensitive. Poor engagement can amplify misinformation, trigger public backlash, and escalate reputational damage. Conversely, proactive engagement fosters trust, transparency, and collaborative problem-solving. Maikaba and Msugther (2029) are of the view that digital media has further transformed stakeholder engagement. Platforms such as Twitter and Facebook enable real-time interaction, allowing stakeholders to voice concerns immediately. While this enhances transparency, it also accelerates the spread of negative narratives. Therefore, organizations must adopt dialogic communication strategies rather than one-way information dissemination.

Internal stakeholders, particularly employees, play a pivotal role during crises. Research indicates that when employees receive timely and accurate information, they become organizational ambassadors rather than sources of rumor. Effective engagement thus involves structured internal communication systems, feedback mechanisms, and leadership visibility. Ultimately, stakeholder engagement during crises is not merely reactive but relational. Organizations that invest in pre-crisis relationship-building are better positioned to maintain legitimacy and stakeholder confidence when disruptions occur.

4.3 Reputation Management and Recovery

Organizational reputation represents an intangible yet invaluable asset that can be severely threatened during crises. Reputation reflects accumulated stakeholder perceptions regarding credibility, reliability, and ethical conduct. Once damaged, recovery requires deliberate, sustained communication and behavioral strategies. Image Repair Theory, advanced by William L. Benoit, identifies several strategies organizations may adopt: denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification (apology). The appropriateness of each strategy depends on perceived responsibility and the severity of harm. For instance, in preventable crises, full apology and corrective action are often more effective than denial.

Reputation recovery also involves symbolic and substantive actions. Symbolic responses include public apologies, leadership statements, and corporate social responsibility initiatives. Substantive responses involve structural reforms, compensation mechanisms, and policy revisions. Stakeholders evaluate not only what organizations say but also what they do following a crisis.

Corporate history demonstrates varying recovery outcomes. For example, companies like Johnson & Johnson are often cited for exemplary crisis response during the Tylenol tampering incident, where swift product recall and transparent communication preserved long-term trust. Conversely, delayed acknowledgment of responsibility in crises such as the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill illustrates how inadequate early responses can prolong reputational damage. Reputation recovery is a long-term process. It requires consistency, accountability, and alignment between communication and organizational reform. Without substantive change, reputation repair efforts may be perceived as superficial image management.

4.4 Crisis Response Effectiveness Measurement

Measuring the effectiveness of crisis communication strategies is essential for organizational learning and resilience building. Crisis response effectiveness refers to the degree to which communication efforts mitigate reputational damage, maintain stakeholder trust, and restore operational stability. Evaluation typically involves both qualitative and quantitative metrics. Key indicators include media sentiment analysis, stakeholder trust surveys, social media engagement trends, stock price fluctuations, and changes in customer retention rates. Digital analytics tools now allow organizations to track real-time sentiment across platforms such as Instagram and LinkedIn.

The effectiveness of response strategies is also assessed against theoretical benchmarks such as SCCT. For instance, did the organization select a response strategy consistent with the level of crisis responsibility attributed by stakeholders? Did the timing of the response meet expectations for immediacy? Another dimension of measurement is internal performance evaluation. This includes assessing response coordination, clarity of messaging, leadership involvement, and adherence to crisis communication plans. Post-crisis audits and after-action reviews are increasingly adopted as standard practice.

Importantly, crisis effectiveness measurement should not be limited to short-term reputation indicators. Long-term outcomes, such as sustained stakeholder loyalty, regulatory compliance improvements, and strengthened governance structures, provide a more comprehensive evaluation of crisis management success.

4.5 Organizational Culture and Crisis Communication

Organizational culture plays a significant role in shaping crisis communication practices and outcomes. Culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, norms, and practices that influence how organizations operate and respond to challenges. According to Schein (2010), organizational culture determines “how people perceive, think, and react” within an organization (Vitalis et al., 2023). In crisis contexts, culture influences decision-making, communication style, and stakeholder engagement.

A culture of transparency and accountability is essential for effective crisis communication. Organizations that prioritize openness are more likely to disclose information promptly and honestly during crises. Rawlins (2008) argues that transparent organizations build stronger relationships with stakeholders, which enhances trust and credibility. Conversely, cultures characterized by secrecy and defensiveness may hinder effective communication and exacerbate crises. Organizational culture also affects internal communication. Employees are key stakeholders who require timely and accurate information during crises. A supportive culture encourages open communication, feedback, and collaboration, enabling employees to act as ambassadors for the organization. Men (2014)

found that internal communication quality is positively associated with employee engagement and trust during crises. Moreover, cultural alignment between organizational values and communication practices is critical. When there is a mismatch between what organizations claim and what they do, stakeholders may perceive communication efforts as insincere. This underscores the importance of authenticity in crisis communication.

Global organizations face additional challenges related to cultural diversity. Hofstede (2011) highlights that cultural differences influence communication preferences, risk perception, and trust. Therefore, multinational organizations must adapt their crisis communication strategies to different cultural contexts to ensure effectiveness. In conclusion, organizational culture is a foundational element of crisis communication. A culture that promotes transparency, accountability, and collaboration enhances communication effectiveness and supports successful crisis management.

4.6 Media Relations in Crisis Communication

Media relations constitute a vital component of crisis communication, as traditional and digital media serve as primary channels through which information about crises is disseminated to the public. During crises, the media not only report events but also shape public perception and influence stakeholder reactions. According to Fearn-Banks (2017), effective media relations involve “building and maintaining positive relationships with journalists to ensure accurate and balanced coverage during crises” (p. 4).

The media’s agenda-setting role is particularly significant in crisis contexts. McCombs (2004) argues that the media influence what issues the public considers important by determining the prominence of news coverage. In crises, extensive media attention can amplify reputational risks, making it essential for organizations to engage proactively with journalists.

Timeliness and accuracy are critical in media relations. Organizations must provide verified information promptly to prevent speculation and misinformation. Coombs (2015) emphasizes that delayed communication can create an information vacuum that the media may fill with unverified sources. Therefore, organizations should establish media protocols and designate spokespersons to ensure consistency (Oreoluwa et al., 2024).

The rise of digital media has transformed media relations. Online news platforms and citizen journalism have increased the speed and reach of information dissemination. Schultz et al. (2011) note that social media interactions often influence mainstream media narratives, creating a hybrid media environment. This requires organizations to monitor both traditional and digital media channels (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024a).

Credibility is a key determinant of effective media relations. Organizations that maintain transparency and honesty are more likely to receive favorable media coverage. Conversely, attempts to manipulate or withhold information may damage credibility and lead to negative reporting. In summary, media relations are integral to crisis communication. By fostering trust, ensuring accuracy, and engaging proactively with journalists, organizations can influence media narratives and mitigate reputational damage.

4.7 Ethics and Transparency in Crisis Communication

Ethics and transparency are fundamental principles that underpin effective crisis communication. Ethical communication involves honesty, fairness, and responsibility in

disseminating information, while transparency refers to openness and accessibility of information. Together, these principles enhance stakeholder trust and organizational legitimacy. According to Bowen (2013), ethical public relations is grounded in moral philosophy and requires organizations to consider the broader impact of their actions on society. In crisis situations, ethical communication becomes even more critical, as stakeholders rely on accurate information to make informed decisions.

Transparency is closely linked to trust. Rawlins (2008) defines transparency as “the deliberate attempt to make available all legally releasable information” (p. 73). Organizations that practice transparency are more likely to maintain credibility during crises. Conversely, lack of transparency can lead to suspicion, misinformation, and reputational damage. Ethical dilemmas often arise in crisis communication, particularly when organizations must balance legal considerations with public interest. For example, disclosing certain information may expose organizations to legal liability, yet withholding it may harm stakeholders. Coombs (2015) suggests that organizations should prioritize stakeholder welfare when making ethical decisions.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) also plays a role in ethical crisis communication. Organizations with strong CSR reputations are more likely to be perceived as trustworthy during crises (Kim & Liu, 2012). This highlights the importance of ethical behavior beyond crisis situations. In conclusion, ethics and transparency are essential for effective crisis communication. Organizations that prioritize honesty, accountability, and stakeholder welfare are better positioned to navigate crises and maintain long-term credibility.

4.8 Crisis Communication in Developing Countries

Crisis communication in developing countries presents unique challenges and opportunities due to contextual factors such as limited infrastructure, regulatory environments, cultural diversity, and media systems. In countries like Nigeria, crisis communication practices are shaped by socioeconomic conditions, political dynamics, and technological disparities. Okigbo and Pratt (2015) argue that public relations in developing countries often faces structural constraints, including limited professionalization and inadequate regulatory frameworks. These challenges affect the implementation of standardized crisis communication strategies.

Media systems in developing countries are often characterized by a mix of traditional and emerging digital platforms. While social media adoption is increasing, access to reliable internet remains uneven. This creates challenges for reaching diverse stakeholder groups during crises. Ojebode (2018) highlights that communication strategies must consider both urban and rural audiences to ensure inclusivity. Cultural factors also play a significant role. High-context communication cultures, common in many developing countries, emphasize indirect communication and relational dynamics (Hofstede, 2011). This influences how crisis messages are interpreted and received.

Additionally, trust in institutions may be lower in developing contexts, affecting stakeholder responses to crisis communication. Organizations must therefore invest in relationship-building and credibility enhancement.

Despite these challenges, developing countries offer opportunities for innovative communication strategies. The widespread use of mobile technology, for example, enables rapid information dissemination. Organizations can leverage localized communication

channels to engage stakeholders effectively. In summary, crisis communication in developing countries requires context-specific approaches that consider infrastructural, cultural, and institutional factors.

V. Conclusion

Digital crisis communication has become an essential component of organisational resilience in Nigeria, particularly in an environment where social media and digital platforms have accelerated the speed, reach, and intensity of crisis situations. The analysis demonstrates that organisations can no longer rely solely on traditional communication channels when responding to crises. Effective crisis management increasingly depends on timely, transparent, consistent, and strategic engagement with stakeholders across digital platforms. Organisations that actively monitor online conversations, provide accurate and prompt information, acknowledge stakeholder concerns, and maintain open channels of communication are better positioned to minimise reputational damage and sustain stakeholder trust.

The study further establishes that stakeholder engagement is central to successful reputation recovery. In the Nigerian context, employees, customers, investors, regulators, media organisations, communities, and other stakeholders increasingly expect organisations to demonstrate accountability and responsiveness during crises. Digital platforms provide organisations with opportunities to communicate directly with these stakeholders, correct misinformation, demonstrate empathy, and rebuild confidence. However, ineffective responses, delayed communication, denial of responsibility, inconsistent messaging, or attempts to suppress criticism can intensify public distrust and prolong reputational damage. Overall, digital crisis communication should be understood not merely as a reactive strategy but as an integral part of organisational resilience and long-term reputation management. Organisations in Nigeria need to develop proactive digital crisis communication frameworks that integrate social media monitoring, stakeholder mapping, rapid response mechanisms, transparent communication, and post-crisis reputation recovery. Building digital communication capacity, strengthening crisis preparedness, and maintaining credible stakeholder relationships before, during, and after crises can enhance organisations' ability to withstand disruptions and recover more effectively. The study therefore concludes that organisations that strategically leverage digital communication for stakeholder engagement, trust-building, and reputation recovery are more likely to achieve sustainable resilience in Nigeria's increasingly complex and digitally mediated organisational environment.

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