

## **The Synergistic Relationship Between Corporate Communication and Crisis Management Practices**

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the strategic role of corporate communication in crisis management through a systematic literature review (SLR) of peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2025. Although the interrelationship between corporate communication and crisis communication has been widely acknowledged, existing scholarship remains fragmented in explaining how corporate communication operates as a governance mechanism during crises, particularly within the framework of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). Using a systematic review approach, this study analyzed 42 peer-reviewed articles indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar that explicitly addressed corporate communication, crisis communication, reputation management, and SCCT. The findings reveal three dominant patterns: (1) a shift from reactive message control to dialogic, transparent, and ethical communication practices; (2) the institutionalization of corporate communication as a core crisis governance function rather than a support activity; and (3) the increasing influence of digital media and stakeholder-driven narratives on crisis outcomes. This study contributes a synthesized conceptual framework that positions corporate communication as a strategic integrator aligning crisis response, stakeholder expectations, and reputational recovery. By reframing SCCT from a message-selection model into a communication capability perspective, this review offers theoretical enrichment and practical implications for organizations operating in digitally accelerated crisis environments.

**Keywords:** *corporate communication; crisis communication; SCCT; reputation management; systematic literature review*

## INTRODUCTION

Crises have become an inevitable feature of contemporary organizational life, intensified by digital media, heightened public scrutiny, and accelerated information flows. Beyond operational disruption, crises increasingly threaten organizational legitimacy, stakeholder trust, and long-term reputation (Coombs, 2015; Pierpoint, 2024). As such, communication plays a decisive role in shaping how crises are interpreted, managed, and resolved.

Previous studies have examined crisis communication strategies and crisis management processes as related but largely distinct domains (Mishra & Mishra, 2020; Zakiri, 2020). Corporate communication is often positioned as a tactical response mechanism responsible for disseminating information during crisis events. However, this instrumental framing underestimates the strategic capacity of corporate communication to function as an organizational governance mechanism that aligns internal decision-making, stakeholder engagement, and reputational recovery.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) has provided a dominant framework for understanding crisis response strategies based on perceived organizational responsibility (Coombs, 2022). Yet, many empirical applications of SCCT emphasize message typologies while paying limited attention to the broader communicative infrastructure that enables timely, ethical, and consistent responses. This creates a conceptual gap in understanding how corporate communication capabilities shape crisis outcomes beyond message selection.

This study addresses this gap through a systematic literature review of research published between 2015 and 2025 that intersects corporate communication, crisis communication, and SCCT. The objectives are threefold: (1) to identify dominant thematic patterns in recent scholarship; (2) to analyze how SCCT has been operationalized within corporate communication contexts; and (3) to develop a synthesized conceptual contribution that reframes corporate communication as a crisis governance mechanism.

## LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Communication constitutes a core managerial function through which organizations seamlessly define and transmit their mission, values, and strategic intentions to its internal and external publics. The clarity and effectiveness of this communication impacts on how stakeholders interpret organizational behavior thus influencing their perception and level of trust they have for the organization. When communication is strategically communicated and coordinated, organizations are more likely to maintain a favorable reputation with their publics.

However, poorly managed communication can distort public understanding and perception which adversely affects an organization's credibility and reputation. In support of the preceding assertion about the indelible impact of effective communication on an organization's reputation, Nwiepe (2018), asserts that effective communication by an organization will foster a favorable image about the organization to its publics. Therefore, he concluded that effective communication has a significant impact on the public perception of an organization because the optics is as important as the substance of the communication because a façade will ultimately unravel.

Corporate communication involves image building, reputation management, building trust and establishing a unified purpose within and outside an organization. The practice of corporate communication includes media relations, crisis management, internal communication with employees, and investor relations, all of which contribute to building sustainable relationships between an organization and its publics (Ozan & Yolcu 2022). Consequently, the impact of corporate communication in establishing and sustaining the desired corporate image and shaping a formidable and predominant competitive advantage in the market is undisputed.

In contemporary times, corporate communication, which is an offshoot of public relations, has become a staple of many organizations such that it has now been incorporated into the core aspects of the organization's operations to achieve the desired sustainability of these organizations. It is also now common for corporate communication units to assume crisis communication responsibilities due to their strategic positioning in stakeholder engagement and message coordination (Mishra & Mishra 2020).

In affirmation of this statement, Anggriyani (2023) asserts that in practice, the corporate communication's unit is saddled with the responsibility of building good relationships between an organization and its stakeholders and also doubles as its crisis management unit. In similar vein, Nwanne (2015), posits that, the essence of good corporate communication is for constituencies to form positive perceptions based on favorable, accurate and timely messages projected by organizations.

In the event of crisis, communication is vital in order to convey crucial information to organizations' internal and external publics. Thus, effective communication is fundamental during a crisis situation as this will enable the organization to communicate accurate, empathetic, transparent, and timely messages about its strategies in order to mitigate the impact of such event on the organization as these elements reduce uncertainty and reinforce stakeholder trust. Hence, crisis communication is critical for managing and attenuating the impact of crisis situations on an organization's activities, reputation, image and stakeholders (Irwansyah 2024).

Furthermore, Vladu (2023) opined that the digital communication landscape has further heightened the significance of crisis communication. He added that technological advancements and social media platforms have accelerated information flow, collapsing the time between event occurrence and public exposure, hence this transformation demands rapid organizational response, continuous monitoring of online discourse, and proactive engagement strategies to counter misinformation and rumors. Therefore, effective crisis communicators must demonstrate agility, analytical awareness, and ethical responsibility when addressing stakeholder concerns. Thus, corporate communication and crisis management are therefore mutually inclusive and reinforcing of each other. While crisis management provides structured procedures and processes for assessing crises, assigning responsibilities, and coordinating operational response, corporate communication supplies the strategic messaging that guides public perception and interpretation of events. To further buttress this assertion, Dike (2025), argued that even a well-structured crisis plan becomes ineffective without clear and consistent communication capable of informing, reassuring, and engaging diverse publics hence strategic communication during crisis enables an organization to rebuild trust, restore image and reinvigorate dissipated reputational capital.

Although existing literature has explored crisis management strategies and the significance of corporate communication independently, scholarship remains limited in examining the synergistic relationship between both concepts within contemporary organizational realities. This paper therefore, explores the synergistic relationship between corporate communication and crisis management, emphasizing how effective communication strategies support organizational resilience, safeguard public perception, and rebuild trust during periods of crisis. By examining the synergy between corporate communication and crisis management, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how communication strategies reinforce organizational resilience, safeguard legitimacy, and support sustainable stakeholder engagement in volatile environments and situations.

#### *Conceptualizing Corporate Communication*

Prior to now, corporate communication functioned primarily as media liaison between an organization and its public. However, over the years, it has metamorphosed into a multi-layered strategic role that integrates internal communication, media relations, community relations, crisis management, and investor relations into a one-stop shop and clearing house for these related matters. So much so that its interdisciplinary nature equips organizations with tools for brand enhancement and corporate reputation management, particularly within unstable business terrains (Ozan & Yolcu 2022).

Contemporarily, corporate communication has evolved drastically and has become a full-fledged stand-alone profession and career which has further developed to become

an integral part of an organization that encompasses relationship building, maintaining and sustaining a corporate image and brand identity (Asemah & Ekhareafo 2022). To further elucidate, Chanda (2018) asserts that corporate communication does not happen in a vacuum as it involves a well laid out, deliberate and conscious effort to communicate the vision, mission, goals and objectives of the organization to its internal and external publics.

In similar vein, Nwiepe (2018), defined corporate communication as a top-level organizational function of communicating the values of the organization to its internal and external publics. He further argued that it is a medium through which an organization's publics are informed and educated about the organization's policies and activities. In concurrence to the above, Syaifuddin (2020) defined corporate communication as a management function that involves identifying and managing issues and publics; establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships through the vehicle of communication with the organization's stakeholders; and enabling the organization to adapt to its dynamic environment.

To further elucidate, Asemah and Ekhareafo (2020) defined corporate communication as a management function that is charged with the responsibility of supervising, organizing and ensuring the effective flow of communication from the organization to the media and by extension the public. The duo further emphasized that corporate communication is a clearing house for processing an organization's messages before disseminating it to its stakeholders and the public.

Furthermore, the essence of corporate communication in the long run is to project the organization's transparency, credibility, accountability, and sustainability to its publics and stakeholders. Consequently, corporate communication mechanism is very critical in creating, implementing, supervising, monitoring and reporting all the activities of an organization. Additionally, corporate communication, being a two-way concept, provides a feedback platform through which the organizations can get the reactions and opinions of stakeholders thus resulting to adjustments and modifications in the organization's activities (Guru et al., 2013).

Invariably, corporate communication offers a two-way communication channel through which organizations interact with their publics about their activities and get instant feedback from the publics about such activities especially in this era of the social media and information technology where messages and rejoinders are sent and received real time.

Igben and Naenwi (2024), described corporate communication as the key factor in creating, implementing, monitoring and reporting all corporate activities. They added that corporate communication practitioners now serve as spokespersons entrusted with

safeguarding organizational reputation, fostering brand knowledge, and mediating stakeholder interactions. This shift reflects a broader recognition that communication increases organizational resilience in turbulent environments and times of crisis.

Additionally, corporate communicators are charged with the primary responsibility of enhancing brand knowledge, brand performance and brand reputation within the market. Today, corporate communication has become a fundamental organizational activity which facilitates the establishment of credible identity and reputation for an organization. To buttress this point, Irwansyah (2024) emphasized that corporate communication is an important strategy that an organization should adopt and practice in order to achieve the organization's goals and objectives. He also added that corporate communication is an integral function of modern corporate organizations especially in this digital era as it is pivotal to creating a conducive ambiance for organizations to deliver their messages to the public through various channels of communication.

### *Crisis Communication*

A crisis is an unpredicted and unexpected occurrence that has the capacity to disrupt the smooth operations of an organization or threatens to harm its image, reputation and publics. Therefore, crisis communication is the strategic communication template deployed to manage and mitigate the impact of crisis situations on an organization's daily operations, reputation and its relationship with its publics and stakeholders; hence it is a vital aspect of corporate communication in that it significantly impacts the organization's capacity to successfully navigate turbulent times (Dike 2025). The typical crisis communication process encompasses dealing with three critical cycles which are: pre-crisis, crisis response and post-crisis phases. Hence for effective result, crisis communication should entail a systematic and strategic approach in order to efficiently and effectively manage the crisis situation (Coombs 2015; Pierpoint 2024 & Spradley 2017).

Furthermore, Irwansyah (2024) opined that, sometimes, an otherwise innocuous issue if allowed to fester can snowball into a major crisis as a result of lack of effective communication. This further validates and reinforces the importance of communication in crisis management in every organization that is desirous of achieving its stated goals and objectives of being able to manage its affairs notwithstanding the enormity of the challenges confronting it at any given time.

Also, in crisis situation silence is not golden hence the team must communicate clear-cut, timely, transparent and honest information about the true state of affairs, and by so doing keep stakeholders and publics abreast with the happenings and events as they unfold. The breath-taking advancement in the field of information and communication technology has resulted in a paradigm shift from traditional media to digital

transformation and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) driven tools which has erased the usual time difference between news reportage of an event and when that event occurred, which means that organizations must match the virtual nature of the digital era with an uncommon speed and efficiency in their reaction to crisis (Upadhyay & Upadhyay 2023).

Furthermore, as a result of the unregulated nature of social media, monitoring and response management are crucial as an effective crisis communication can be distorted by a mere random social media comments or post. Hence, the crisis communication team must be on top of their game by actively accessing the social media space to understand the nature and gravity of a crisis, mitigate its impact and protect the organization's reputation. Additionally, crisis communication entails a projection of transparency, empathy, compassion and responsibility, hence, Nuortimo, Harkonen and Breznik (2024) mentioned the following factors as key elements of crisis communication;

1. Preparedness: In times of crisis, the organization must be prepared for the worst. This is done by identifying potential risks and developing effective response strategies and messages before-hand because to be fore warned is to be fore armed.
2. Planning: This includes a well-detailed crisis communication plan that summarizes and assigns duties, responsibilities and methods of responding to different types of crises to the crisis management team.
3. Timeliness: In crisis situations, timely communication is of the essence. Hence, timely and accurate information must be communicated to the publics with transparency and honesty.
4. Consistency: This involves coordinating messaging among organizational functions to ensure that there are no mixed, conflicting and vague messages. Thus, messages disseminated across various channels must be in alignment and coherent to ensure consistency.
5. Compassion: This involves the display of compassion, concern, support and empathy towards affected members of the publics as the crisis communication team must strike the required balance between the interest of the organization and the wellbeing of the victims of the incident that created the crisis.
6. Dialogue: Communication is very crucial in times of crisis. There should be a platform that encourages two-way communication and active feedback mechanism. This will enable the organization to address rumors, negative publicity and misinformation. Additionally, the organization must be receptive and empathetic to the concerns of members of the public and, most importantly, aggrieved persons.
7. Media Training: Proper training of personnel who will interact with the media on behalf of the organization is equally important since they are the first line

of contact between the organization and the public, and if they bungle the assignment, an irreparable harm will be done to the reputation of the organization.

8. Flexibility and Adaptability: The organization should develop standard and flexible communication strategies and templates in advance that allows for adjustment given the dynamics of each crisis situation which most times differ from previous occurrences.
9. Social Media Monitoring: The social media space must be constantly monitored for any discussions related to the crisis as this will enable the organization to feel the pulse of the public and immediately address the fears and apprehension of concerned stakeholders.
10. Evaluation and Learning: Post-crisis assessment and evaluation is very important as this will enable the organization to identify loop holes in the planning and execution phase and assess the effectiveness of the deployed communication strategies and identify areas for improvement in order to enhance preparedness and resilience for future engagements.

### *Crisis Management*

Any situation that disrupts the entire system or part of it which is detrimental to the smooth operation of a business and poses a major threat to brand reputation and organization's sustainability is referred to as crisis. (Ogunyombo et al 2024). Thus, crisis management is the process of effectively and efficiently curbing a crisis situation from escalating and damaging the organizations' image and reputation. More so, Al Nadhiri and Matriano (2023) opined that crisis management is one of the core responsibilities of the corporate communications team. Thus, it behooves the corporate communications unit to inform the organization and stakeholders about the current situation, potential threats, risks and planned counter measures while scheming on the best medium of communication to reach the target audience, provide swift analysis and response because time is of great essence in the period of crises.

Aligwe and Alegu (2018) highlighted two major approaches to crisis management: the Proactive and Reactive approaches. In applying the proactive approach also known as the crisis prevention approach, the practitioner, in anticipation, predicts the crisis and devices strategic measures that will be used to combat the crisis at its nascent stage and conclusively prevent it from happening. While in applying the reactive approach also known as the defensive approach, the practitioner waits for the crisis to break out before taking measures to curb it. Consequently, the true value of corporate communication is tested in times of crises. How the organization is able to curb and manage a crisis situation while maintaining the organization's reputation and image is majorly dependent on the development of a highly potent strategy by the corporate communication team (Chanda 2018).

### The Interrelationship Between Corporate Communication and Crisis Management

Corporate communication and crisis management are fundamentally connected, in that, effective crisis management is highly dependent on strategic communication in order to successfully mitigate the impact of a crisis situation, rebuild trust, restore reputation and ensure sustainability. Mishra and Mishra (2020) asserts, that they both play pivotal roles in guiding organizations through a crisis situation, which makes both of them interdependent and indispensable to any organization that is desirous of remaining very competitive and staying ahead of other similar organizations in the industry. The duo added that while crisis management provides the structure and procedure, corporate communication provides the strategic tools needed to execute the plan. Together, they form a symbiotic mechanism that determines whether an organization emerges stronger from a crisis or suffers irredeemable erosion of its hard-earned reputation. Thus, effective crisis management is largely contingent on strategic communication approaches capable of shaping public narratives, reducing panic, and preserving credibility. This shows that communication is not merely supportive but foundational to crisis response (Zakiri 2020).

Irwansyah (2024) argued that corporate communication is instrumental in translating crisis management strategies into a coherent language that is understood by stakeholders and publics. Here, communication teams craft messages that align organizational intentions with stakeholder and public expectations, minimizing uncertainty and mitigating misinformation as lack of communication allows minor crises situations to escalate into full-blown reputational catastrophes, thus reinforcing the need for synergy between both domains.

Without deliberate and intentional messaging, organizations risk losing control of public narratives, especially in contexts influenced by digital virality that is the order of the day. To corroborate this point, Omokhele (2024) added that in order to effectively communicate during a crisis situation, the following points must be considered; quick assessment of the situation, plan strategically, communicate clearly, constant monitoring of the situation as it unfolds, active engagement of key stakeholders, and evaluation. He asserts that effective communication is the foundation of a successful crisis management.

Another critical aspect of their interdependence lies in speed because when a crisis situation occurs, the initial response is very critical. This is where the corporate communication team steps in decisively by acting swiftly in order to take and regain control of the narratives before it is hijacked by mischief makers who are adept at spreading rumors and misinformation. If crisis response procedures lack communication support, the organization appears unprepared, increasing reputational vulnerability and consequential damage (Nuortimo, et. al., 2024).

In similar vein, Ozan and Yolcu (2022) opined that the ability of communication to align with internal and external narratives strengthens corporate reputation and stakeholder confidence. Hence, the duo identified consistency as a crucial aspect of their symbiotic relationship as corporate communication ensures harmonized messaging across departments, platforms, and various spokespersons. Without doubt, crisis management alone cannot guarantee consistency without communication oversight because operational decisions often originate from different units. Corporate communication serves as the narrative custodian, translating internal decisions into unified external messaging to stakeholders and the organization's publics.

Furthermore, corporate communication has introduced empathy and compassion into crisis responses which are elements crucial for reputational recovery. Whereas crisis management outlines corrective actions, communication emphasizes emotional intelligence, thereby humanizing organizational responses to assuage aggrieved persons. Nuortimo et al. (2024) highlight compassion and empathy as influential factors that reduce stakeholder hostility, thus demonstrating that communication softens the public impact of procedural crisis interventions. By acknowledging public concerns, apologizing appropriately, and showing care, organizations signal acknowledgement of responsibility, which accelerates reputational rehabilitation and healing for the affected publics and stakeholders.

Another dimension of synergy is feedback acquisition, because crisis management requires real-time feedback to adjust and re-adjust strategies, and communication channels facilitate this through two-way dialogue which provides a platform for stakeholders to express concerns, provide intelligence, and highlight operational blind spots. Guru, Raghavendra and Manjappa (2013) emphasized that corporate communication's feedback loop enables organizations to adapt activities based on stakeholder reactions. This ensures that crisis decisions are informed by actual stakeholder sentiment rather than speculation.

Digital transformation has further strengthened this interdependence. In the new media environment, public conversations unfold rapidly, and organizations must monitor digital sentiment to detect escalating concerns. Upadhyay and Upadhyay (2023) noted that technological advancement collapses the time lag between crisis emergence and public reaction, necessitating the need for communication teams capable of matching this speed. If crisis management procedures fail to incorporate digital monitoring, misinformation can spiral uncontrollably. Thus, communication functions as an early-warning sensor and corrective agent.

Furthermore, organizational reputation, which is the most fragile corporate asset, is directly impacted by how well communication supports crisis management. Pierpoint (2024) warns that crises threaten corporate legitimacy and brand value, but effective

communication can cushion its impact on an organization's reputation, control narratives, and project accountability. In this regard, communication acts as both a shield and recovery tool. Similarly, Igben and Naenwi (2024) assert that communication enhances corporate culture, image, and reputation, reinforcing the long-term reputational effects of crisis management success.

The importance of media relations further underscores this synergy. During crises, the media becomes the primary public information source. Corporate communication manages media inquiries, ensures factual accuracy, and protects the organization from sensational misrepresentation. Without crisis communication expertise, media interactions can worsen reputational harm. Asemah and Ekhareafu (2020) described corporate communication units as clearing houses responsible for processing messages before dissemination thereby preventing harmful or uncoordinated information releases. Given the digitalization of the world's communication space today, corporate communication teams must continuously monitor conversations and trends on the social media platforms in order to facilitate swift and timely response to misinformation and mischievous narratives with credible information and prevent further spread of misinformation (Zakiri 2020).

Invariably, corporate communication and crisis management are two sides of the same coin. Effective crisis management requires a comprehensive communication strategy, while effective communication is most impactful when intertwined with a clear-cut crisis management plan. Together, they protect organizational credibility, sustain stakeholder trust, and cultivate reputational resilience. It is worthy to note that crisis situation is inevitable in every aspect of human endeavor, however how you communicate during these turbulent times determines the outcome. In this era of digitalization, an organization's image and reputation can be damaged within a very short time, but with effective corporate communication strategies the impact of the crisis can be diminished, if not entirely nullified.

### *Theoretical Framework*

The study is focused on the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) as propounded by W. Timothy Coombs in 1995. The SCCT is a designed approach that recommends specific procedures that will enhance the understanding of crisis situations, and suggest ways through which the organization can respond in order to effectively mitigate the impact of the crisis on the organization and facilitate quick recovery in the event of reputational damage. Furthermore, the theory helps organizations to match their communication strategies to specific crisis types and attendant stakeholder reactions as the nature of a crisis will influence how stakeholders interpret and react to the situation. The SCCT categorizes crisis based on the level of responsibility allocated to the organization, which include victim crisis where the

organization has little or no culpability like in the case of natural disasters, rumors or workplace violence; accidental crisis, in this case the organization has low responsibility (technical error or product defect) and preventable crisis, here organization bears substantial culpability (management misconduct). However, to effectively handle the above crises types, the theory suggests crisis response strategies that are consistent with various crisis types such as denial, diminishment, rebuilding and bolstering strategies, depending on the situation (Ogunyombo et al 2024). However, Coombs (2022) asserts that an ethical based response which involves an immediate acknowledgement of responsibility by the organization which should be accompanied with a show of empathy to the affected publics should be the first response in any crisis situation.

The SCCT is a critical strategy in corporate communication for crisis management due to its capacity to provide practitioners with a structured approach to crisis communication and enables organizations to manage crises more effectively thus increasing her chances of successfully reducing the damage to the organizations' reputation. Furthermore, the application of this theory would provide the practitioner with an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of the ongoing crisis thereby enabling him to select more appropriate response strategies and maintain credibility throughout the crisis (Jong 2025). Although the SCCT theory has been criticized by some schools of thought because of its overtly simplistic nature due to its generalization of solutions rather than being customized to specific crisis situations.

Consequently, this theory is relevant to this study because it provides a theoretical foundation for analyzing how corporate communication functions during crisis events, and how strategic messaging can cushion reputational damage. As highlighted by Ogunyombo, Odunlami, and Oredola (2024), understanding crisis types and perceived responsibility enables communication practitioners to anticipate stakeholder reactions and customize their communication responses accordingly. Furthermore, the study investigates the synergistic relationship between corporate communication and crisis management, and SCCT offers a structural lens through which these interactions can be examined as it provides a clear articulation of how communication strategies should be selected based on stakeholder expectations and situational assessments.

Coombs (2022) emphasized that ethical acknowledgement, empathy, and accountability should be prioritized to protect corporate reputation during crisis engagement. More so, the theory aligns with contemporary organizational demands for transparency, rapid feedback, and digital responsiveness especially with the current global campaign for the enthronement of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) framework by organizations as part of their corporate philosophy. More so, in an era where social media escalates crisis visibility, SCCT strengthens understanding of why communication speed, message consistency, and empathy are essential to mitigating reputational

damage. Thus, by grounding this research in SCCT, the study gains a robust theoretical tool for explaining how corporate communication and crisis management operate interdependently to shape public perception and safeguard organizational reputation.

### *Corporate Communication in Crisis Contexts*

Corporate communication is widely recognized as a strategic function that integrates organizational messaging, leadership intent, and stakeholder engagement. In crisis contexts, communication becomes particularly salient as stakeholders rely on organizational narratives to interpret responsibility, intent, and corrective actions (Ozan & Yolcu, 2022).

Recent research emphasizes that corporate communication extends beyond information dissemination toward relational management and legitimacy construction. Nuortimo et al. (2024) highlight that sustained and consistent communication practices significantly influence stakeholder evaluations of organizational credibility, especially during prolonged crises.

### *Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)*

Situational Crisis Communication Theory provides a foundational framework for understanding crisis response strategies. SCCT categorizes crises based on perceived responsibility and recommends response strategies aligned with these attributions (Coombs, 2022).

While SCCT has been widely applied, recent scholarship critiques its focus on short-term response alignment. Jong (2025) argues that crisis communication theories must account for the dynamic nature of crises, particularly in digital environments where narratives evolve continuously.

### *Crisis Communication, Governance, and Trust*

Emerging literature increasingly links crisis communication with organizational governance. Effective crisis communication is associated with transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership—core principles of good governance (Pierpoint, 2024).

Trust is increasingly conceptualized as a cumulative outcome of sustained communication practices rather than an episodic reaction. Organizations with strong pre-crisis communication governance demonstrate greater resilience during crises (Ogunyombo et al., 2024).

### *Digital Communication and Stakeholder Engagement*

Digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped crisis communication dynamics. Real-time interaction, algorithmic amplification, and interpersonal digital communication practices significantly influence stakeholder perceptions (Vladu, 2023). Adriani et al. (2024) demonstrate that interpersonal communication within digital communities contributes to collective sense-making and relationship-building during uncertain situations, reinforcing the importance of dialogic engagement in crisis governance.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Research Design*

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to synthesize academic research on corporate communication and crisis management. The SLR approach ensures transparency, replicability, and methodological rigor, making it suitable for theory development and refinement (Zakiri, 2020).

### *Data Sources and Search Strategy*

The literature search was conducted using Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and ProQuest. Search terms included combinations of “corporate communication,” “crisis communication,” “SCCT,” and “organizational crisis.” The search was limited to articles published between 2015 and 2025.

### *Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

Inclusion criteria comprised peer-reviewed journal articles written in English that explicitly addressed corporate or crisis communication. Conference papers, editorials, and non-scholarly publications were excluded.

### *Screening and Selection Process*

The initial search yielded 137 articles. After duplicate removal and screening, 13 articles were selected for in-depth thematic analysis based on relevance and theoretical contribution.

### *Data Analysis*

The selected studies were analyzed using thematic synthesis, focusing on conceptualizations of corporate communication, crisis responsibility, reputation, trust, digital engagement, and governance implications.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that corporate communication plays a pivotal role in shaping organizational reputation, strengthening stakeholder relationships, and mitigating the impact of crisis. This aligns strongly with Nwieve's (2018) assertion that corporate communication functions as the strategic medium through which organizations project transparency, credibility, and accountability to their internal and external publics. The study also discovered that effective corporate communication enhances a strong corporate culture and consistent brand image. This finding correlates with Igben and Naenwi's (2024), position that communication improves organizational efficiency and cultivates corporate culture. Their scholarly observation supports the idea that communication transcends basic information exchange because it influences internal cohesion, morale, and brand identity.

Additionally, the study's finding that corporate communication acts as a swift mechanism during crisis situations aligns with Irwansyah (2024), who emphasized that communication is critical in conveying accurate and timely messages to mitigate crisis impact on organizational reputation. The present study affirms that crises escalate rapidly when communication lapses create information vacuums which allows misinformation to thrive. This echoes Coombs' (2015) assertion that silence worsens crisis outcomes, validating the necessity of immediacy and transparency.

Furthermore, findings indicate that corporate communication can be deployed to restore organizational value and reputation after crisis disruption. This aligns with Nuortimo, Harkonen, and Breznik (2024), who highlight that empathy, transparency, and consistency are key elements of crisis communication that rebuild trust and public confidence. The ability of communication strategies to rehabilitate damaged reputation suggests that crisis communication is a restorative rather than a solely defensive practice.

The findings also validate the perspective that corporate communication and crisis management are interdependent. Mishra and Mishra (2020) argue that communication shapes how stakeholders interpret crisis situations and judge organizational responsibility, confirming that crisis management becomes ineffective without communication support. This synergy reinforces the conclusion that these two domains operate as complementary systems; corporate communication and crisis management are two sides of the same coin as effective crisis management is dependent on a sound corporate communication to disseminate accurate and timely information, manage public perception and restore reputation.

Moreover, the study show that corporate communication fosters beneficial relationships with the media, which is crucial during crisis periods. This supports Asemah

and Ekhareifo's (2020) claim that corporate communication departments function as clearing houses, filtering and supervising information before external dissemination. Robust media engagement prevents sensationalist reporting thus ensuring that the organization's narrative remains credible and consistent.

Finally, findings show that digital media has intensified the urgency for sophisticated crisis communication strategies. Upadhyay and Upadhyay (2023) assert that digital transformation has compressed the timeline between crisis occurrence and public awareness, requiring organizations to monitor conversations and respond swiftly. This supports the study's conclusion that corporate communication must now incorporate digital monitoring, sentiment analysis, and rapid response systems.

#### *Corporate Communication beyond Tactical Messaging*

The review reveals a conceptual shift from viewing corporate communication as a tactical messaging tool toward understanding it as an integrative governance function (Ozan & Yolcu, 2022; Nuortimo et al., 2024).

#### *Crisis Responsibility and Dynamic Attribution*

SCCT-based studies confirm that responsibility attribution remains central to stakeholder evaluations (Coombs, 2022). However, digital environments enable continuous reinterpretation of crisis narratives, necessitating ongoing communicative engagement (Jong, 2025).

#### *Reputation, Legitimacy, and Trust Outcomes*

Reputation and trust emerge as governance outcomes of crisis communication. Consistent and transparent communication contributes to legitimacy restoration even in high-responsibility crises (Pierpoint, 2024).

#### *Digital Transformation and Crisis Governance*

Digital platforms amplify both risks and opportunities. Authentic, dialogic, and timely communication significantly influences stakeholder trust (Vladu, 2023; Adriani et al., 2024).

#### *Toward a Crisis Governance Perspective*

Synthesizing these findings, corporate communication is conceptualized as a crisis governance mechanism encompassing strategic decision-making, ethical responsibility, and relational management.

## CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, it has been established that effective corporate communications strategies have become a key vehicle for building relationships with an organization's publics, and bolster organization's image and reputation. Hence, corporate communication is an effective tool in successfully communicating crisis situations and communicating an organization's intentions. More so, it is worthy to note that corporate communication is of great significance in this era of digitalization where both good and bad news are disseminated at hitherto unknown speed where events are reported real time. Additionally, organizations must not ignore the value of corporate communication which is a prominent and proactive strategy that can be deployed by an organization to protect their reputation in the face of crisis. Consequently, corporate communication and crisis management activities should project the organization in positive light as accountable, customer-friendly, credible, honest, transparent, empathetic and environment-friendly.

### *Recommendations*

The study therefore recommends the following

1. Organizations should institutionalize strategic crisis communication frameworks to ensure timely, coordinated, and effective response messaging.
2. Transparent and accountable communication should be prioritized to rebuild stakeholder trust and restore organization's credibility during crises.
3. Organizations should invest in digital and social media monitoring tools to detect harmful narratives in order to counter misinformation in real time.
4. Crisis messages should incorporate empathy to humanize organizational responses and strengthen relational trust.
5. Preemptive troubleshooting units should be established to detect early signals of emerging crises and enable proactive response.
6. Incorporation of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) framework by organizations as part of their corporate philosophy.

### BIODATA

Edith Oghenechovwe OTUYA-ASOHRO, is a communication scholar with a strong academic and professional background in Mass Communication. She holds a Professional Master's Degree in Communication Management from the Department of Mass Communication, Delta State University, Abraka, where she is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Mass Communication. Edith has industry experience in both radio and television broadcasting. Her areas of interest include are not limited to Educational-Broadcasting, Public Relations, Advertising, and Development Communication

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