Corporate Communication and Crisis Management Among Journalists in Lagos State

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Abstract:
This study examined the role of corporate communication in crisis management among journalists in Lagos, Nigeria. The study specifically examined the role of corporate communication in identifying potential crisis among Journalists, examine the role of corporate communication in crisis prevention among Journalists and find out the extent to which corporate communication is used in planning for crisis among Journalists. In order to achieve the broad objective of this study, three (3) research questions and one (1) hypothesis were raised for validation. The research questions were analyzed using the simple percentage hypotheses while the hypothesis was validated using the multiple regression analysis. The data for the analysis were collected by the researcher using questionnaire as the research instrument. The study used a sample of one hundred and eighty five (185) randomly selected journalists of guardian Newspaper. From the result of the empirical analysis, it was established that age (β =-.575, t=-11.575, at $p<0.05$), qualification (β =-.675, t=7.345, at $p<0.05$) and crisis planning (β =-.121, t=-3.222, at $p<0.05$) have a significant negative effect on crisis management. It was also found that corporate communication (β =.065, t =41.065, at $p<0.05$) have a significant positive effect on crisis management among journalists of guardian newspaper. The study concluded that corporate communication among journalists of guardian newspaper contributes positively to crisis management. The study recommended that, given the trending corporate use of social media to facilitate messages, firms need to integrate these media tools available to facilitate their flow of communication.

Key Words: *Crisis, Crisis management, corporate communication, Crisis prevention, Crisis planning*

1. Introduction

Crisis is inevitable in every human setting because members of a group, association or organization are often divergent in their opinions, perspectives, interests, conducts, orientation and goals. These differences manifest in the process of decision making, goal settings, assignment of tasks and responsibility, distribution and allocation of resources among others which sometimes translates to clashes and contradictions resulting in crisis. The occurrence of crisis is not time or place specific, it happens anytime and at any place. It happens in private organizations and also public settings even in the political and religion settings crisis is prevalent (Lando, 2014). When crisis occur it has a potential negative outcome on organizations, industries as well as the public, products, services, or corporate image, disturbing the normal functioning of a corporation for an indefinite period of time (Fearn-Banks, 2007). It interrupts normal business transactions and can sometimes threaten the existence of the organization (Lando, 2014).

The causes of crisis can be internal or external forces. While the external factors are forces outside the control of the organization such as natural disasters and accidents, political and social changes, economic crises, security and environmental issues, the internal factors are forces not visibly outside the organization such as poor work organization, strained interpersonal relationships, incompetence and immorality of management, corruption, poor working conditions, unrealistic union goals, lack of communication, etc. Whichever forces that led to a crisis situation, managing communication during a crisis is one of the most important processes of crisis management (Tipurić et al., 2013). This is because crisis situations are not only obstacles to overcome, but also are events that can provide an organization with an opportunity to strengthen practices and reputation in the eyes of stakeholders (Wrigley et al., 2003).

In a situation when an organization is under intense criticism or serious allegations, managers are forced to communicate reactively and, as much as possible, to neutralize negative consequences that the crisis could have on the organization's image (Tipurić et al., 2013). With effective communication in a crisis situation, the image of an organization can be enhance in the public, while poor handling or lack of communication can have a particularly negative impact on its market activities in the future (Jugo, 2013). Of significant importance for the outcome of a crisis situation is the manner in which the corporation communicates with the media as a communication channel towards the vast majority of stakeholders, it is necessary that the media is approached carefully, respecting all their idiosyncrasies (Tipurić et al., 2013) The establishment of a regular and effective communications process can significantly reduce people's levels of uncertainty In turn, this eliminates one of the major obstacles to people's willingness to get involved in the change process, which can be crucial within the affected company. It draws the employees into the discussions and debates about the need for and form of the change, and allow them the freedom to discuss the issues involved openly, to get them convinced of the need for change (Várnai, 2015)

Crisis situations at the firm level, regardless of the size of the organization, have a major impact on its future economic development. In recent time, there have been cases of downsizing, retrenchment and excess workload on the limited workforce below the required staff strength, reduction and delay in the payment of salary, abusive supervision and undue harassment and abuse of workers in most organizations in Nigeria while blaming the condition on the hostile and harsh economic and political environment in the country (Várnai, 2015). As such, employees in these organizations have increasingly resulted to crisis as a way of protecting their interest and fighting for their right. Unfortunately, many of the crisis cases in industry have also affected the

environment (Bakos & Dumitrascu, 2017). Thus, the survival of corporate organization is now tied to the effective use of communication.

Against this background, we examined the role of corporate communication in crisis management among Journalists. We specifically examined the role of corporate communication in identifying potential crisis among Journalists, examine the role of corporate communication in crisis prevention among Journalists and find out the extent to which corporate communication is used in planning for crisis among Journalists. This will foster the understanding of the role of communication among members of organizations across disciplines. As such, the study will create important awareness for all types of businesses on the severe implication of crisis on corporate goals and plan as well as the need to prevent crises from occurring and how to manage them before they would really hurt further activity. The study will also serve as important source of valuable material to students and future researcher on corporate communication and crisis management.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

The core variables requiring clarification in this study are corporate communication and crisis management. Corporate Communication is a broad and comprehensive term that covers a variety of communication and management activities consisting of public relations, crisis and emergency communication, corporate citizenship, reputation management, community relations, media relations, investor relations, employee relations, marketing communication, management communication, corporate branding, image building and advertising (Saha, 2014). It manages all company's communication activities as an integrated whole with the aim of building and maintaining a valuable corporate reputation across different stakeholder groups, markets and audiences (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2010). On the other end, though there is no universally accepted definition of a crisis, the general consensus is that a crisis is an event that can harm and even destroy an entire organization (Mitroff et al., 1996). A crisis can be defined as an incident or event with consequences, which pose a significant threat to the strategic objectives of an organization (Várnai, 2015). (Coombs & Holladay, 2002) defines crisis management as a course of action designed to reduce the damage a crisis can cause on any institution as well as its stakeholders. It protects and defends an organnisation in cases of growing public concerns to its repute, together with its brand name or its publics or both. These include downsizing, corporate lawsuits, negative media coverage, government probes, quality problems, product recalls, boycotts and strikes, or even the unexpected change/death of a senior executive, etc.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study draws from Heider the founder of the attribution theory, who posits that generally people tend to infer causes in terms of how they perceive a situation and how the factors related to the event they are faced with impact on the individuals being (Stephen W. Littlejohn & Karen A. Foss, 2011). The attribution theory is relevant to this study in that the experiences that the institution encounters during a crisis determine what cause of action is necessary to take. The plan of action and steps of implementation during crises resolution will be based on individual dispositions experienced during particular

situations. In situational crisis communication theory SCCT, (Coombs & Holladay, 2002), projects peoples' reactions to the response strategy that is rolled out in order to manage the crisis. Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) by (Coombs & Holladay, 2002), in its center, is built upon the Attribution theory according to which, people search for the cause and effect of an event. They deduce their role in an event and are faced with feelings either of anxiety, sadness or even joy depending on the outcome of the crisis. Whilst communicating with the public, it is important to read their body language. Whatever the reaction, it will inform the researcher as to how effective they are in communication; as well as form the basis through which the public will react during a crisis to counter the effects.

2.3 Empirical Review

Several studies abound showing on corporate communication and crisis management. For instance, (Manoli, 2015) examines how crisis communications is managed, by investigating the current practices and techniques employed in English Premier League clubs, as they were presented by communications professionals employed in the clubs. The analysis of the clubs' practices underlines the lack of pro-activity and presents the most popular strategies of crisis communications management; the "wait for the dust to settle" and the "react promptly before the noise grows". In another study, (Johansen & Frandsen, 2012) presented and discussed some of the main findings from a large survey of internal crisis management and crisis communication conducted in the spring of 2011 among public and private organizations in Denmark. The survey was conducted among the 367 largest private companies and among 98 public organizations. The survey questionnaire comprised 36 questions and was sent to respondents who typically are responsible for the crisis-preparedness of their organizations. The results from the survey show that the vast majority of organizations have a crisis or contingency plan, and most of these plans contain an internal dimension relating to the management and communication with the internal stakeholders during a crisis. In addition, the results clearly indicate a strong relation between organizational size and crisis management; the larger the organization the more likely to have a crisis plan. This particularly pertained to the private organizations. In a similar vein, (Tipurić et al., 2013) analyzed the process of crisis communication, characteristics of known reactive crisis communications strategies and examine if there are differences in attitudes towards reactive communication strategies among future business professional using two samples of undergraduate seniors at the University of Zagreb: business school students and public relations students. To test the differences in tendencies towards certain reactive strategies we used a survey methodology where students were presented with hypothetical situations. By conduction a comparative analysis of their responses and tendencies to use specific strategies, the results show that there are significant differences between the two groups. Students of public relations have a greater tendency to use active strategies compared to their counterparts studying business economics, who in turn display greater caution and passivity in their approaches.

3. Methodology
3.1Population and Sample

In this study, the descriptive quantitative research design is adopted based on the sample of Journalists working in Guardian Newspaper drawn from the population of journalists in Lagos State using a self-structured design questionnaire. The Guardian established in 1983 by Alex Ibru

is an independent daily newspaper published in Lagos, Nigeria, by Guardian Newspapers Limited first published on 22 February 1983 as a weekly, appearing on Sundays *(Fuller, 2004)*. The choice of Guardian Newspaper staff is because recently the newspaper's management announced a plan to reduce their workforce in Nigeria and in the United Kingdom (UK) by 18 per cent over the next three years in a bid to balance their books by 2019 to bring down the company operating costs a potential crisis situation. The Guardian Media Group's number of employees in the fiscal year was nine hundred and ninety nine (999) persons employed in the editorial and production category according statista. Convenient sampling technique was used to select sample for the study based on Yaro Yamani approach given as $n = \frac{N}{(1+N)(e)^2}$ where: n is the sample size, N is the population, e is the error limit (0.05 on the basis of 95% confidence level). Since the estimated population size is nine hundred and ninety nine staff (999), the appropriate sample size is given as; $n = \frac{N}{(1+N)(e)^2}$

$$n = \frac{999}{[1 + (999 \times (0.05)^2)]}$$

$$n = \frac{999}{1 + (999 \times 0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{999}{3.498}$$

n = 185

Hence, the total sample size for the purpose of this study is one hundred and eighty-five (185) staff. The size is considered sufficiently large enough to carry adequate estimation.

3.2 Research Instrument and Data Analysis

The data for this study is primary data by nature. A self-structured closed ended questionnaire was designed to accommodate the sample of the population under study. The instrument is well structured presented to experts in the area of tests and measurement who approved that the questionnaire items are adequate and valid enough to elicit information. A pilot study conducted using test-retest method based on questionnaire administered to a sample of twenty (e0) respondents which are not part of the main study suggests that the questionnaire is valid for the research. Data collected on the demographic features of the subjects was presented in contingency table and subsequently interpreted respectively. Data generated on the basis of the research questions and hypotheses raised in the study from the respondents' responses to the questionnaire was analyzed using the regression Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

4. Results and Discussion

In the study, one hundred and eighty-five (185) questionnaires were administered to the sample of respondents but one hundred and forty (140) questionnaires retrieved and filled correctly was used in the analysis.

4.1 Analysis Socio-Demographic Data
Table 4.1: Descriptive analysis of the respondents Socio-Demographic Data

	Variables	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	63	49.1
	Female	77	50.9
	Total	140	100.0
Age	15-30 yrs	10	32.3
	31-50 yrs	38	40.5
	51 yrs above	92	27.1
	Total	140	100.0
Marital Status	Single	25	36.8
	Married	47	43.2
	Others	68	20.0
	Total	140	100.0
Qualification	SSCE & below	10	32.3
	OND/NCE	38	40.5
	BSc./BA/HND	70	50.0
	Post Graduate	22	15.7
	Total	140	100.0
Ethnicity	Yoruba	89	55.6
	Hausa	7	31.5
	Igbo	44	12.9
	Total	140	100.0
Religion	Christian	39	40.9
	Muslim	87	55.0
	Others	14	4.1
	Total	140	100.0

Source: Authors, Field Survey, 2019

Table 4.1 revealed that 49.1% of the respondents were male, while the remaining 50.9% were female. In the study 32.3% of the respondents are between the age of fifteen and thirty years, 40.5% of the respondents are between the ages of thirty one and fifty years of age, while the remaining 27.1% are fifty years and above. In the study 36.8% of the respondents are single, 43.2 of them are married while the remaining 20.0% of the participants are neither single nor married. 32.3% of the respondents have SSCE and below qualification, 40.5% of the respondents have OND/NCE qualification, 50.0% of the respondents have B.Sc/BA/HND qualification while the remaining 15.7% have post graduate qualification.40.9% of the respondents are Christians, 55.0% are Muslim while the remaining 4.1% belong to other religion. The table also revealed that 55.6% of the respondents are Yoruba, 31.5% are Hausa and 12.9% are Igbo.

4.2 Empirical Results

In order to find out the relative contribution of independent variables to crisis management, a multiple regression analysis was carried out. Table 2 shows the results of the computations.

Table 2: **Regression Analysis of Variance**

		Beta	T	P.	R	R^2	F-ratio	Pvalue
1	(Constant)			.				
	Age	-.575	-11.575	.037(a)			6061.741	P<0.05
	Qualification	-.675	7.345	.025(a)	.873(a)	.645		
	Corporate communication	.065	41.065	.011(a)				
	Crisis planning	-.121	-3.222	.000(a)				

a Dependent Variable: Crisis management

Source: Authors, Field Survey, 2019

The results in Table 2 indicated that age (β =-.575, t=-11.575, at p<0.05), qualification (β =-.675, t=7.345, at p<0.05) and crisis planning (β =-.121, t=-3.222, at p<0.05) have a significant negative effect on crisis management. It was also found that corporate communication (β =.065, t =41.065, at p<0.05) have a significant positive effect on crisis management of Journalists. Similarly, the F-ratio associated with the R^2 = 0.655 shows a significant joint prediction of crisis management in guardian newspaper (p<0.05) indicating that only about 65.5% of the variance in crisis management among journalists can be accounted for by the combination of these variables, while about 54.5% of crisis management of journalists is accounted for by other variables other than the factors under investigation.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The implication of the above result is that, corporate communication among journalists contributes positively to crisis management in guardian newspaper. This indicates that the corporate communication system of the firm support or even enhance the organization's image among stakeholders. This result corroborated the result of the study conducted by (Johansen & Frandsen, 2012) on a large survey of internal crisis management and crisis communication. The results clearly indicate a strong relation between organizational size and crisis management; the larger the organization the more likely to have a crisis plan.

It was also in line with the study conducted by (Tipurić et al., 2013) on differences in attitudes towards reactive communication strategies among future business professional. The research results show that students of public relations have a greater tendency to use active strategies compared to their counterparts studying business economics, who in turn display greater caution and passivity in their approaches. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proffer: Corporate communication managers should set up a brain storming session with the most senior managers and representatives of the firm who are most likely to be affected by the crisis to allow participants to be open minded, creative in their views and to work together and develop

strategies to tackle the potential crisis. Also, given the trending corporate use of social media to facilitate messages, firms need to integrate these media tools available to facilitate their flow of communication.

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