

Systemic Drivers of Effective Crisis Communication: A Narrative Review Across Contexts

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ABSTRACT: Organizational communication is pivotal in sustaining institutional resilience during crises, yet systematic evidence from Southeast Asia and Indonesia remains limited. This narrative review aims to synthesize recent empirical findings on internal and external communication strategies, with a focus on their effectiveness in fostering trust, engagement, and organizational reputation. Literature published between 2019 and 2024 was retrieved from Scopus, Google Scholar, and PubMed using Boolean search strings, and a total of XX eligible studies were included in the final synthesis. Findings indicate that internal strategies emphasizing transparency, emotional support, and digital connectivity enhance employee morale and cohesion, while external strategies rely on pre-crisis reputation, real-time messaging, and sensitivity to socio-political contexts. The growing use of social media and AI enables real-time sentiment analysis and tailored outreach, though ethical concerns and technological disparities between developed and developing countries remain significant barriers. This review reaffirms the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), while proposing contextual adaptations that incorporate cultural diversity and technological complexities. Practically, the study highlights the urgency of systemic reforms, capacity building, and adaptive policies to strengthen organizational communication in Indonesia and the broader Southeast Asian region.

Keywords: Crisis Communication, Organizational Messaging, Internal Communication, External Communication, Public Trust, Digital Crisis Response, SCCT.



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INTRODUCTION

Organizational communication in crisis contexts has emerged as a critical area of inquiry within the broader discipline of communication studies. Conceptually, it is defined as the process by which information, ideas, and values are exchanged among individuals within an organization, serving as a mechanism to manage strained relationships during high-pressure situations (Comfort & Wang, 2022; Ruppel et al., 2022). Operationally, organizational communication in crisis

encompasses the deployment of specific strategic responses, including the selection of appropriate communication channels and the application of techniques designed to enhance clarity and stakeholder engagement (Sánchez & Batista, 2023). The growing complexity and unpredictability of global crises, such as pandemics, natural disasters, and socio-political unrest, have highlighted the indispensable role of effective organizational communication in managing stakeholder expectations, maintaining operational stability, and preserving institutional legitimacy.

In Southeast Asia, and Indonesia in particular, scholarly attention to crisis communication has gained momentum. Empirical studies indicate that administrative readiness and staff training are vital for effective crisis management within local governments (Bishu et al., 2023). Other investigations have shown that rapid and transparent communication is essential for fostering organizational resilience during disaster events in Indonesia (Grayman, 2014). Internal communication mechanisms that enhance employee engagement and reduce psychological distress have proven particularly valuable in navigating crises (Gomes et al., 2021). Importantly, the socio-cultural context in Southeast Asia profoundly shapes organizational responses to crisis, with culturally attuned communication strategies seen as essential for achieving resonance with local populations (Goby & Nickerson, 2015). Tailoring messaging to align with local values and norms ensures that crisis communication efforts are perceived as legitimate, empathetic, and trustworthy (Alvinus et al., 2020).

The salience of crisis communication has been further emphasized through local case studies in Indonesia, where effective organizational messaging has been shown to enhance both emergency response coordination and post-crisis recovery (Grayman, 2014; Bishu et al., 2023). Despite the unique challenges posed by infrastructural and contextual diversity in the region, organizations in Southeast Asia have demonstrated a capacity to learn and adapt from prior crisis experiences. This adaptability underscores the strategic importance of communication in both preventing escalation and promoting institutional learning.

On a global scale, the COVID-19 pandemic has catalyzed a paradigmatic shift in how organizations communicate and function under crisis conditions (Pascual-Ferrá et al., 2022). In healthcare settings, for instance, prolonged exposure to high-stress environments has resulted in widespread burnout, with studies reporting that 94% of nurses in Canada experienced emotional exhaustion (Udod et al., 2023). Such data points illustrate the urgency of fostering effective internal communication to support employee well-being. Furthermore, organizations that embraced transparent and supportive communication practices were more successful in reducing uncertainty and strengthening employee engagement during crises (Sundram et al., 2018; Ruppel et al., 2022).

In the Indonesian context, the importance of organizational communication during crises is no less acute. Natural disasters and health emergencies have underscored the necessity for timely and responsive communication strategies. Research shows that transparent messaging during emergencies not only minimizes reputational damage but also enhances organizational credibility (Comfort & Wang, 2022; Forsgren et al., 2022). Public trust, a fragile yet vital asset, is bolstered when organizations demonstrate openness and empathy in their communication efforts.

Despite growing recognition of its importance, organizations often face significant obstacles in implementing effective communication strategies during crises. A key challenge involves ambiguity in role expectations and the proliferation of misinformation, which can demoralize staff and

volunteers (Sundram et al., 2018). The lack of clear communication protocols exacerbates these issues, leading to fragmented information dissemination and reduced message efficacy (Ruppel et al., 2022).

Internally, another persistent issue is the exclusion of employees from decision-making processes, which undermines their sense of ownership and commitment (Gomes et al., 2021). Studies have consistently shown that inclusive communication strategies strengthen employee identification with the organization, a critical factor during times of instability (Sundram et al., 2018). Externally, the dynamic nature of crisis situations often results in information volatility, demanding that organizations remain agile in adapting their communication frameworks to new developments (Ruppel et al., 2022).

Given these challenges, the urgency of organizational communication during crises lies not merely in transmitting accurate information but also in building systems that support stakeholder trust and organizational resilience. Ensuring communication flows in both directions—from leadership to employees and vice versa—is essential for maintaining operational continuity and psychological safety during uncertain times.

In the past five years, a number of literature gaps have emerged in the field of crisis communication (Nistor & Beuran, 2015). While various organizations have adopted new communication strategies in response to crises, there remains a notable deficiency in the strategic use of data and information systems to enhance communication effectiveness. Studies have highlighted the need for robust health information infrastructures and efficient data collection methods to support real-time decision-making during crises, especially within healthcare contexts (Forsgren et al., 2022; Wherton et al., 2022). Moreover, research on communication practices in under-resourced environments or in countries with limited technological infrastructure is still lacking, leaving a critical blind spot in the literature.

Earlier reviews, such as those by Ruppel et al. (2022), emphasized the value of transparency and organizational support in reducing uncertainty and emotional distress among employees. While these findings offer valuable guidance, they also reveal persistent organizational struggles to maintain open lines of communication during turbulent times. Additionally, studies on risk communication have pointed to the influence of political dynamics and uncertainty on stakeholder relationships, indicating a need for more context-sensitive research (Sataøen & Eriksson, 2023).

To address these gaps, there is a pressing need for research that explores how effective communication strategies can be adapted to various socio-cultural and institutional contexts. Investigating how national and organizational cultures shape communication outcomes will enhance the practical applicability of research findings. Although transparency and accountability remain fundamental, they must be complemented by a nuanced understanding of local cultural norms and communication preferences.

This review aims to examine how organizational communication is practiced during crisis events, with a specific focus on Southeast Asia and Indonesia. It will analyze the strategies adopted by organizations to maintain internal cohesion and external legitimacy in the face of disruptive events. Key factors such as transparency, employee inclusion, information accuracy, and cultural adaptability will be critically evaluated.

The geographical scope of this review centers on Southeast Asia, with Indonesia as a focal point, given the region's susceptibility to natural disasters, pandemics, and political instability. The region's rich cultural diversity and varied infrastructural capacities offer a compelling context for exploring the dynamics of crisis communication. By synthesizing studies from both local and international perspectives, this review seeks to contribute a regionally grounded yet globally relevant understanding of organizational communication in times of crisis.

METHOD

To develop a comprehensive understanding of organizational communication in crisis contexts, this study employed a narrative review methodology, focusing on a structured yet flexible approach to synthesize current knowledge. The aim was to collect, evaluate, and interpret relevant peer-reviewed literature that investigates both internal and external organizational communication strategies during crises. This methodological design facilitates the integration of diverse theoretical perspectives and empirical findings, particularly those reflecting regional and cultural dynamics, including those in Southeast Asia and Indonesia.

The literature search was carried out across three major academic databases: Scopus, Google Scholar, and PubMed. These databases were chosen due to their extensive indexing of scholarly publications across communication studies, organizational behavior, crisis management, and interdisciplinary research domains. Scopus, with its coverage of high-impact journals, served as the primary source to ensure academic rigor, while Google Scholar offered broader inclusivity, capturing grey literature and preprints that may not be indexed in Scopus. PubMed was included to explore communication within health-related crises, considering its relevance during public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

To construct a precise and inclusive search strategy, Boolean operators were used to connect key concepts. The Boolean combination utilized was: ("organizational communication" OR "crisis communication") AND ("crisis management" OR "crisis response") AND ("internal communication" OR "external messaging"). Variants of this structure were also employed, such as ("organizational communication" AND "crisis management" AND ("internal communication" OR "external messaging")), and ("crisis communication" AND ("internal communication" OR "external messaging")) AND ("management" OR "organization"). These search strings were applied in titles, abstracts, and keywords to ensure both relevance and breadth of coverage. The objective was to capture a wide spectrum of literature addressing communication approaches used during different crisis types, including natural disasters, pandemics, and organizational disruptions (Hamid et al., 2024).

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were clearly defined to ensure methodological consistency and quality control. The inclusion criteria required that each selected article meet four essential standards. First, the study had to be based on original research, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative studies, including case studies, empirical evaluations, and literature reviews. Second, the article had to directly address organizational communication in a crisis context, whether related to public health emergencies, natural disasters, or political unrest. Third, the article must have been published within the last five years (from 2019 to 2024) to ensure the data and insights reflect

current practices and evolving challenges. Fourth, each study was required to include clear empirical data or a well-grounded theoretical analysis that contributes to the understanding of internal or external communication during crises.

Exclusion criteria were equally stringent. Studies were excluded if they were not directly related to the topic of organizational communication or if they addressed crisis management without a communication focus. Non-academic publications, such as opinion pieces, blog posts, and non-peer-reviewed materials, were omitted to maintain the academic integrity of the review. Additionally, older studies published before 2019 were excluded on the basis that they might not align with the rapidly changing landscape of organizational communication influenced by technological advances and global crises. Articles with significant methodological weaknesses, such as lack of peer review, limited data transparency, or unclear analytical frameworks, were also excluded from consideration.

The process of literature selection was conducted in multiple phases to enhance the robustness and replicability of the review. In the initial phase, the search results generated from the three databases were imported into a citation management software, where duplicates were identified and removed. The remaining records were subjected to a title and abstract screening to assess preliminary relevance based on the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. At this stage, studies that clearly did not meet the criteria, such as those discussing general business management without a focus on communication during crisis, were eliminated.

Following the initial screening, the full texts of the shortlisted articles were retrieved and evaluated in-depth. This stage involved critical appraisal of the research aims, methodology, data quality, and relevance to the research questions of the review. Each study was assessed for its contribution to the field, with particular attention paid to the type of crisis discussed, the organizational context, the communication strategy employed, and the reported outcomes. Priority was given to studies that provided nuanced insights into the dynamics of internal and external communication, such as employee engagement, stakeholder trust, message framing, and feedback mechanisms.

The types of research designs included in this review were diverse, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Qualitative studies provided rich, contextualized understandings of how organizations and individuals experience and navigate crises, particularly through interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic approaches. Quantitative studies, on the other hand, offered measurable data on the effectiveness of communication interventions, often using surveys, experiments, or statistical modeling to assess outcomes such as employee morale, stakeholder trust, or message retention. Case studies were particularly valuable in illustrating the real-world application of communication strategies in specific crises, offering both descriptive depth and practical implications.

This narrative review also integrated relevant literature reviews and meta-analyses where appropriate, especially those synthesizing empirical findings across different geographical or cultural settings. These sources contributed to the broader understanding of best practices and common pitfalls in organizational crisis communication. Importantly, attention was given to ensuring diversity in study origins, aiming to include findings from both Global North and Global South contexts. This balance was critical for addressing the central objective of the study: to

explore how cultural, institutional, and infrastructural differences shape the communication strategies adopted by organizations during crises.

Finally, the studies selected for synthesis were coded thematically based on emerging patterns related to internal communication (e.g., employee engagement, leadership messaging), external communication (e.g., public trust, media strategy), communication channels (e.g., digital, face-to-face, hybrid), and outcomes (e.g., resilience, recovery, organizational learning). This thematic structure guided the subsequent presentation of findings and allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the complex and multifaceted nature of organizational communication in crisis settings.

In summary, this methodology enabled a rigorous, contextually sensitive exploration of how organizations across various regions, including Southeast Asia, employ communication strategies to navigate crises. Through the systematic identification, evaluation, and synthesis of relevant literature, this review provides a solid foundation for understanding both theoretical developments and practical implications in the field of crisis communication. It also highlights the importance of tailoring communication practices to specific cultural and institutional environments, thereby advancing scholarly and practical knowledge in this critical domain.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents a synthesis of findings from the literature on organizational communication in crisis contexts, structured around three primary themes that emerged during the review: internal communication strategies, external communication strategies, and the impact of crisis communication on reputation and trust. The results highlight empirical insights and comparative perspectives across both developed and developing nations, with particular attention to the Southeast Asian context.

Internal communication during crises has proven critical in preserving organizational cohesion, enhancing employee engagement, and building trust. Numerous studies have found that organizations with effective internal communication mechanisms are better equipped to manage workforce uncertainty and emotional distress. For example, research by Udod et al. (2023) found that clear organizational support and consistent communication significantly enhanced job satisfaction among healthcare professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic, helping to mitigate symptoms of emotional exhaustion. Similarly, Ruppel et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of transparent, bidirectional communication, which allows employees to feel informed, valued, and involved in organizational decision-making processes. When employees are empowered through communication, they develop stronger organizational commitment, which is essential during times of instability.

The digital transformation catalyzed by the pandemic has introduced new modalities for maintaining internal connectivity. Woods and Watkins (2022) observed that open and transparent digital communication helped reduce organizational anxiety and facilitated smoother transitions to remote work environments. In addition, Stranzl et al. (2024) noted that teleworkers, particularly those in knowledge-intensive industries, reported higher job satisfaction when communication incorporated emotional and interpersonal elements. This underscores the dual importance of information transmission and emotional connection, especially when physical proximity is limited.

In comparing internal communication practices across developed and developing nations, the disparities become evident. Organizations in high-income countries typically benefit from superior technological infrastructure and institutional support, enabling more sophisticated and reliable communication systems (Frenkel et al., 2021). Conversely, in lower-income contexts such as parts of Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, organizations often face significant barriers in implementing digital communication strategies. These include limited access to reliable internet, lower digital literacy, and inadequate training for both employees and management (Rice & Searle, 2022; Mehra, 2023). The result is a diminished capacity to engage employees effectively during crises, exacerbating organizational vulnerability and weakening collective resilience.

Woods and Watkins (2022) further emphasized that in developing contexts, the absence of structured internal communication frameworks can result in fragmented messaging, increased misinformation, and heightened employee anxiety. These disparities highlight the need for capacity-building initiatives that focus on digital infrastructure, communication training, and inclusive leadership practices to bridge the communication divide.

Turning to external communication, the literature identifies several key factors that determine the success of organizational messaging during crises. Public trust, media relations, and the broader socio-political environment significantly influence how external stakeholders perceive organizational responses. Yacoub et al. (2021) and Fortunato et al. (2018) found that the clarity and timeliness of external messages are crucial in crisis situations, as they help manage stakeholder expectations and reduce reputational risk. Moreover, Kim and Lim (2020) emphasized that an organization's pre-crisis reputation plays a decisive role in how crisis messages are received. Organizations with a history of transparency and ethical conduct are more likely to have their messages accepted and supported by the public.

The political and social context surrounding a crisis further affects communication efficacy. For instance, Aziz et al. (2022) and Mehra (2023) documented cases where public trust was undermined by political polarization or historical grievances, rendering even accurate and timely messages ineffective. This underlines the importance of context-sensitive communication strategies that acknowledge and address public sentiment.

Emerging technologies have also reshaped the landscape of external communication. Social media has become a dominant channel for real-time updates and stakeholder engagement, particularly during rapidly evolving crises. Yadav et al. (2024) and Yu and Ismail (2024) documented how organizations used platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to disseminate urgent information, correct misinformation, and provide emotional support to affected communities. The immediacy and interactivity of social media have proven to be powerful tools for enhancing transparency and responsiveness.

Artificial intelligence is increasingly being integrated into crisis communication practices. Organizations are leveraging AI-powered sentiment analysis to gauge public reaction and tailor messages accordingly. Kim and Lim (2020) and Boman et al. (2023) highlighted that adaptive messaging based on real-time sentiment data can significantly enhance message accuracy, tone, and relevance. These innovations represent a shift toward more personalized, data-driven communication strategies that align closely with audience expectations.

The third thematic area concerns the impact of crisis communication on organizational reputation and public trust. Boman et al. (2023) demonstrated that proactive and transparent crisis communication can help preserve or even enhance an organization's reputation during turbulent times. According to Ruppel et al. (2022), internal communication strategies that prioritize clarity and empathy not only alleviate employee uncertainty but also contribute indirectly to external reputation management by creating a more stable and credible organizational image.

Public trust, once lost, is difficult to regain. Hong et al. (2023) found that well-executed crisis communication plays a pivotal role in restoring damaged trust, especially when combined with visible organizational actions that reflect accountability and concern. Zhao (2019) emphasized that the effectiveness of crisis messaging is often contingent upon the political context. In democratic societies, transparent communication tends to foster greater public trust, whereas in authoritarian contexts, state-controlled narratives often generate skepticism and resistance. This indicates that communication strategies must be tailored not only to the nature of the crisis but also to the governance and information cultures of the respective regions.

Cross-national studies offer valuable insights into how different societies approach trust-building in crisis contexts. García-de-Paz and Bonilla (2021), as well as Karinshak and Jin (2023), observed that digital platforms are being increasingly utilized to facilitate direct interaction between organizations and the public, thereby enhancing trust. These platforms allow organizations to respond to public concerns in real time and demonstrate transparency by sharing decision-making rationales. Bishu et al. (2023) and Zasuwa (2024) found that the integration of AI tools has further empowered organizations to maintain trust by analyzing sentiment patterns and dynamically adjusting communication strategies.

Sánchez and Batista (2023) concluded that effective trust-building strategies must be grounded in local cultural understandings. What works in one country may fail in another due to differences in media consumption habits, trust in institutions, and historical experiences with crises. For instance, a study comparing crisis communication in Japan and Indonesia revealed that while Japanese audiences valued procedural transparency and data precision, Indonesian audiences responded more favorably to messages emphasizing solidarity and moral responsibility (Zhao, 2019).

In sum, the findings suggest that effective organizational communication in crisis contexts is multi-dimensional and highly dependent on both internal capacities and external realities. Internally, organizations must foster transparent, emotionally intelligent communication that empowers employees and enhances resilience. Externally, the deployment of timely, context-sensitive messaging supported by technological tools can bolster public trust and protect reputational assets. Across all levels, cultural sensitivity and adaptive capacity emerge as critical success factors.

The literature reviewed provides a nuanced and empirically grounded understanding of how organizations across the globe, including in resource-constrained settings like Southeast Asia, navigate the complexities of crisis communication (Pyle, 2018). While technological innovations offer new tools, the human elements of trust, empathy, and transparency remain central. Future research should continue to explore the interplay between these dimensions, particularly in regions where infrastructural and cultural barriers persist, to inform more equitable and effective communication strategies during crises.

The findings of this narrative review reaffirm and challenge several components of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), offering nuanced insights into how internal and external organizational communication strategies function during crises (Zhao et al., 2020). SCCT, developed by Coombs, posits that the effectiveness of crisis response strategies depends on how well they align with the public's perceived responsibility for the crisis. The theory emphasizes that appropriate response strategies can mitigate reputational damage and reinforce public trust (Fortunato et al., 2018; Gurkov & Dahms, 2023).

The evidence from this review supports core tenets of SCCT, particularly in demonstrating that transparency, empathy, and consistent communication play significant roles in sustaining or restoring trust and reputation during crises. For instance, organizations that adopted open and supportive communication strategies during COVID-19 succeeded in reinforcing employee engagement and public credibility (Ruppel et al., 2022; Kim & Lim, 2020). This aligns with SCCT's assertion that the choice of response strategy should match the perceived severity and organizational responsibility of the crisis.

Moreover, prior reputation emerges as a protective factor in times of crisis. According to SCCT, a strong pre-crisis reputation can buffer against the erosion of public trust and facilitate faster recovery (Kim & Lim, 2020; Zhao, 2019). This is especially evident in organizations with longstanding stakeholder relationships, where established trust enabled more efficient damage control during crises. In practice, such organizations were able to deploy more credible and compelling messaging, which was positively received due to existing goodwill.

However, the review also identifies limitations in the universal applicability of SCCT, particularly when contextual and systemic variables are considered. Cultural dynamics significantly influence how crisis communication strategies are interpreted and received. In developed countries, audiences tend to value transparency and directness, while in developing nations, communication that emphasizes empathy and collective responsibility might be more effective (Zhao, 2019). These cultural distinctions highlight the limitations of applying SCCT as a one-size-fits-all model and underscore the need for its contextual adaptation.

Another challenge to SCCT is the increasing prominence of interactive and technology-driven communication channels. The theory largely assumes unidirectional communication flows from organization to stakeholders. However, empirical findings suggest that two-way communication through social media and digital platforms has become essential in shaping perceptions and fostering trust during crises (Cheng, 2016; Kim & Lim, 2020). Interactive media allow organizations to receive feedback and adjust messages in real-time, strengthening relational trust. This indicates a need for SCCT to evolve in accommodating the dialogic nature of modern communication.

Furthermore, the role of systemic factors in shaping communication effectiveness during crises must not be understated. Organizational structure, workplace culture, and technological infrastructure are critical enablers or barriers to effective communication.

Hierarchical organizational structures may impede timely information flow, especially during fast-evolving crises. By contrast, decentralized structures that empower mid-level managers and frontline employees to contribute to communication efforts can facilitate rapid and adaptive

responses (Comfort & Wang, 2022; Forsgren et al., 2022). These structures encourage horizontal knowledge sharing, which is vital for synchronized organizational responses.

Cultural dynamics within the organization also play a key role. A workplace culture that fosters collaboration and open communication significantly enhances organizational resilience. For example, organizations that promote employee participation in decision-making and crisis messaging demonstrate higher levels of employee commitment and reduced anxiety (Wherton et al., 2022; Sundram et al., 2018). Conversely, autocratic cultures that stifle feedback inhibit proactive problem-solving and lead to communication breakdowns (Sánchez & Batista, 2023).

Technology constitutes a third major systemic factor. Organizations with advanced digital infrastructure were better equipped to adapt to remote work and sustain internal communication during the pandemic. Platforms enabling real-time collaboration and messaging ensured that all employees remained informed and connected regardless of geographic dispersion (Haddon et al., 2015; Riddell et al., 2022). Technological readiness thus emerged as a critical determinant of communication agility and consistency.

Yet, organizational communication policies often lag behind the demands of modern crises. Many institutions still operate under rigid communication frameworks that fail to accommodate the volatility and speed of crisis contexts. This rigidity results in delayed messaging, missed information, and declining stakeholder trust (Harrison et al., 2017).

To improve policy responsiveness, organizations must develop dynamic and flexible communication protocols that prioritize transparency and timeliness. Such policies should allow room for real-time updates, incorporate employee feedback mechanisms, and enable swift escalation pathways for urgent information (Nhedzi & Azionya, 2022; Visser et al., 2017). The presence of outdated communication policies also underscores the importance of regular policy reviews and crisis simulations to test and refine communication readiness (Frenkel et al., 2021).

Implementing effective communication strategies also requires overcoming systemic inertia. Organizations often face internal resistance when attempting to integrate new technologies or revise existing communication norms. These challenges are particularly acute in entities with entrenched bureaucratic processes or where crisis communication is not institutionalized as a core competency. In these contexts, leadership commitment to communication excellence and resource allocation toward capacity-building are essential.

The literature also reveals a notable gap in exploring communication strategies across diverse crisis types and socio-political settings. Most existing studies focus on health-related or natural disaster crises in high-income countries. There is limited investigation into how communication is managed in politically unstable environments or in regions with underdeveloped infrastructure. This represents an important area for future research. Comparative cross-national studies could elucidate how systemic differences shape crisis communication outcomes, offering insights into context-specific best practices.

Moreover, while the integration of AI and digital analytics into communication strategies is increasingly documented, the ethical implications and equity concerns remain underexplored. Future research should assess how algorithmic decision-making in communication might marginalize certain groups or perpetuate misinformation if not carefully monitored.

Overall, the findings of this narrative review suggest that while SCCT provides a valuable theoretical foundation, its practical application must be expanded to encompass evolving communication modalities and contextual variations. The role of systemic factors—including organizational structures, workplace cultures, and digital capacities—should be integrated into both theory and practice to ensure that communication strategies during crises are not only effective but also equitable and inclusive.

CONCLUSION

This narrative review has explored the critical role of organizational communication during crisis contexts, analyzing internal and external messaging strategies and their impact on employee engagement, public trust, and organizational reputation. The review reveals that transparent, empathetic, and adaptive communication enhances organizational resilience. Internally, open digital communication and emotional connectivity improve employee morale and cohesion during crises. Externally, leveraging technologies such as social media and artificial intelligence enables real-time engagement and sentiment analysis to better manage public responses. Comparative analysis across developed and developing countries highlights structural inequalities that influence communication efficacy, emphasizing the need for equitable access to digital infrastructure and communication training.

The findings reinforce the validity of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) while also revealing its limitations in culturally diverse or technologically advanced communication ecosystems. The discussion indicates that systemic factors such as organizational structure, workplace culture, and communication technology significantly determine how messages are crafted, delivered, and received. Therefore, organizations must revise their communication policies to prioritize flexibility, transparency, and inclusivity.

Urgent interventions are needed to equip organizations with adaptable strategies and infrastructure that support two-way communication. Policy adjustments must focus on decentralizing communication authority, fostering inclusive digital cultures, and integrating real-time response mechanisms. Future research should investigate underrepresented crisis types and geographical contexts, as well as ethical dimensions of AI-based communication strategies. Strengthening internal and external communication, supported by systemic reforms, is pivotal in fostering trust and building resilience during crises.

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