



**ASSESSING PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION
STRATEGIES DURING THE 2019 MICROFINANCE AND BANK SHUTDOWNS IN
GHANA**

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

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BY

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

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DECLARATIONS

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Armah Charity Naa Dedei, declare that this dissertation, except quotations and references contained in published works, which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere. Therefore, I bear the responsibility for any shortcomings.



ARMAH CHARITY NAA DEDEI
(Student)

12/12/2025
DATE

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned supervisor, declare that I supervised the preparation and presentation of this work in accordance with the guidelines for the supervision of a Master's dissertation as laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC).

... 

DR. DANIEL ODOOM
(Supervisor)

DATE: 12-12-2025

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all who were affected in diverse ways during the shutdown of the financial institutions in Ghana during the 2019 Banks and Microfinance reforms. Also, to my participants for never failing to cooperate and support my project. There's no doubt this task was time-consuming and demanding, but with the help of Olumber, my cherished friend, this project has become a success today.

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ABSTRACT

This study interrogates public perception of government communication strategies during the 2019 microfinance and bank shutdowns in Accra, Ghana, a crisis that necessitated major financial sector reforms but profoundly eroded public trust. Employing a concurrent triangulation mixed-methods design, the research integrated quantitative surveys of 100 residents with in-depth qualitative interviews of 20 affected individuals in selected communities. The findings, structured around four research objectives, reveal a severe communication breakdown. Residents experienced the crisis as a period of deep personal devastation and financial anxiety, with their trust in the financial system fundamentally shattered. The government's multi-channel communication strategy, while utilising both traditional and digital media, was critically ineffective; messages were consistently criticised as delayed, overly technical, inaccessible due to language barriers, and lacking in empathy. Consequently, public satisfaction with official communication was extremely low, as strategies failed to provide clarity, reassurance, or actionable guidance. The study identified key challenges, including contradictory messaging, the rapid spread of misinformation, and the exclusion of vulnerable, low-literacy populations. Based directly on these empirical insights, the study recommends a fundamental overhaul of crisis communication, proposing a unified, apolitical, and empathetic framework that prioritises plain language in local dialects, leverages trusted community channels, and fosters proactive, two-way public engagement. This research contributes to crisis communication theory within the Global South context and offers evidence-based policy recommendations for rebuilding trust and ensuring effective public discourse during future financial reforms.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Financial institutions, particularly banks and microfinance organizations, have long served as essential drivers of economic growth and poverty reduction across the world (World Bank, 2020). Their primary contributions to socioeconomic development include the mobilization of capital, extension of credit, and promotion of financial inclusion, especially among underserved populations (Beck et al., 2007). In sub-Saharan Africa, these institutions play a particularly important role in bridging economic disparities and facilitating the transition from informal to formal economic activities (Beck & Honohan, 2007). In Ghana, the financial sector witnessed significant expansion from the mid-2000s, largely driven by liberalization policies, regulatory reforms, and increased foreign investment (IMF, 2018). However, this growth concealed deep-seated structural weaknesses. Many institutions suffered from poor governance, undercapitalization, weak risk management systems, and regulatory failures (BoG, 2019; Aryeetey, 2020). These challenges culminated in a major financial crisis between 2017 and 2019, prompting the Bank of Ghana to revoke the licenses of insolvent institutions and consolidate others to safeguard depositors and stabilize the financial system (Aboagye, 2020).

Although these interventions were economically necessary, their abrupt implementation generated widespread public anxiety, job losses, and a sharp decline in trust toward both financial institutions and government regulators (Fosu, 2021). Many citizens were left uncertain and fearful, largely because of limited understanding of the rationale, process, and implications of the reforms. In such circumstances, communication becomes pivotal in shaping public perception and maintaining

confidence. Crisis communication theory underscores that, during periods of institutional turbulence, the clarity, timeliness, and credibility of official communication significantly influence how the public interprets and responds to policy actions (Coombs, 2007). Ghana's financial sector clean-up therefore presented an important case for examining how government communication strategies function in a context of economic crisis and uncertainty.

Access to financial services in Ghana is not only an economic imperative but also a mechanism for social empowerment and inclusion. Both banks and microfinance institutions (MFIs) have played central roles in advancing financial inclusion and promoting economic participation. While banks primarily serve corporate entities and formal sector workers, MFIs provide credit and savings facilities to low-income individuals and informal businesses that would otherwise remain excluded from the formal financial system (Aryeetey, 2008; Osei-Assibey, 2015). This dual structure is vital in a country where over 70 percent of the workforce operates in the informal sector and depends heavily on small-scale finance for survival and growth (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). When effectively managed, these financial systems foster entrepreneurship, reduce poverty, and strengthen economic resilience (Yeboah & Sarpong, 2018). However, their effectiveness depends heavily on public trust, which is closely tied to transparency, accountability, and effective regulation. When these principles are compromised, the consequences can extend beyond financial losses to affect livelihoods, community stability, and national economic confidence (Quartey et al., 2012). Consistent and credible communication between financial institutions, regulators, and the public is therefore indispensable for sustaining trust and ensuring inclusive development.

Between 2017 and 2019, Ghana's financial sector faced one of its most significant crises in recent history. The Bank of Ghana, after years of monitoring growing irregularities, revoked the licenses

of over 400 financial institutions, including nine universal banks and hundreds of microfinance firms, citing insolvency, poor governance, and unethical practices (BoG, 2019). The crisis exposed systemic weaknesses such as undercapitalization and ineffective oversight (Aboagye & Akomea-Frimpong, 2020). Although the financial sector clean-up was necessary to restore stability and credibility, it had far-reaching socioeconomic repercussions. Thousands of people lost their jobs, depositors faced prolonged uncertainty about the safety of their savings, and many rural and peri-urban communities that depended on microfinance institutions experienced severe financial disruption (Owusu & Sackey, 2021; Tweneboah, 2021). Beyond the economic hardships, the crisis inflicted psychological distress on affected individuals, particularly those who had entrusted their life savings to now-defunct institutions (Boateng & Ayamga, 2022).

Many Ghanaians perceived the government's communication during this period as inadequate, inconsistent, and overly technical. According to Mensah and Asare (2022), the official communication strategy was often reactive rather than proactive, limiting its effectiveness in addressing misinformation or alleviating public fears. This communication gap deepened public anxiety and mistrust, revealing the critical role of strategic messaging in managing crisis narratives. Heath and O'Hair (2020) emphasize that effective communication during financial emergencies must be transparent, empathetic, and responsive to the public's emotional state to prevent misinformation and panic. In Ghana's case, the disconnect between policy intent and public understanding serves as a cautionary example of how neglecting communication in reform processes can undermine otherwise sound policy measures (Aboagye & Akomea-Frimpong, 2020).

Given the magnitude of the financial sector crisis and its wide-ranging social and economic implications, assessing public perception of government communication during the 2019 microfinance and bank shutdowns is both timely and necessary. Understanding whether the

government's communication strategies mitigated or intensified public mistrust is essential for improving future crisis management. This study, therefore, investigated how Ghanaians perceived government communication during the financial sector reforms and determined whether these strategies helped restore public confidence or contributed to uncertainty and fear. The research contributed to the broader discourse on effective public communication, transparency, and trust-building in times of national economic reform.

1.3 Problem Statement

The 2019 financial sector reforms in Ghana were seen by many as necessary steps to clean up an industry plagued by insolvency, mismanagement, and regulatory lapses. While the reforms themselves were largely considered technically sound and in the public interest, the way they were communicated left much to be desired. Many Ghanaians, especially those who had entrusted their life savings to the banks and microfinance institutions, found themselves engulfed in a cloud of uncertainty. They struggled to get timely, clear, and accurate information about what was happening, what it meant for their money, and what they should expect moving forward (IMANI Africa, 2020; Tweneboah, 2021). For these individuals, the silence and ambiguity from government agencies were not just frustrating, it was frightening.

As people sought clarity, many turned to alternative sources: social media platforms, community leaders, and political commentators. Unfortunately, some of these sources spread misinformation, exaggerated the crisis, and used it to stoke partisan debates (Darko & Owusu, 2021). In times of crisis, communication is more than just delivering information, it is about offering reassurance, restoring trust, and enabling citizens to feel that someone is in control. As Ulmer, et al (2017) have noted, effective crisis communication relies on transparency, empathy, and consistency. When

these elements are missing, even well-designed policies can become objects of public mistrust and resentment.

In Ghana's case, the government's communication during the financial clean-up fell short, there were no clear or unified message. The platforms used to disseminate information, press briefings, websites, occasional social media updates, did not always reach the broader public. Additionally, the tone of official messages sometimes felt cold, overly technical, or dismissive of the real human suffering involved. Given the country's linguistic diversity, varying literacy levels, and reliance on both formal and informal communication networks, conveying critical information required more than just announcements, it required strategic engagement, localized messaging, and a listening ear (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005). People wanted not just facts but empathy and hope.

Although scholars have extensively analyzed the financial and regulatory impact of the reforms (Aboagye & Akomea-Frimpong, 2020), less attention were paid to how ordinary Ghanaians experienced the government's communication, or lack thereof, during the crisis. Were people informed and respected in the process? Did the messages they received inspire trust or deepen anxiety? Did the style, content, and delivery of those messages affect how they coped with the situation? These are the human-centered questions the study sought to answer. By focusing on the lived experiences of citizens during the financial sector reform, the research aimed to illuminate communication influences, trust, emotional well-being, and long-term relationships between the state and its people.

The study specifically focused on Accra, Ghana's capital city, where the effects of the reforms were deeply felt. Accra served as a central hub for the operations of many of the banks and microfinance institutions that either collapsed or consolidated. The residents of this city, including small business owners, pensioners, civil servants, and informal sector workers, faced some of the

harshest consequences of the reforms. The study aimed to enhance the perspectives of individuals directly affected by investigating specific regions in Accra, offering detailed insights into how communication influenced their comprehension, reactions, and trust levels. The findings may be crucial in developing more human-centered, adaptive communication techniques during forthcoming economic or institutional transformations.

1.4 Research Aim

The study sought to interrogate public perception of government communication strategies during the 2019 microfinance and bank shutdowns in Ghana.

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To ascertain the general views of residents in selected areas of Accra on the 2019 banking sector crisis.
2. To identify the specific communication channels and strategies employed by the government in managing the banking crisis within Accra.
3. To assess the level of satisfaction among affected residents of Accra regarding the government's communication strategies during the financial sector reforms.
4. To explore the communication-related challenges faced by government institutions in disseminating crisis information to the public in Accra during the banking sector clean-up.

1.6 Research Questions

1. What are the general views of residents in selected areas of Accra on the 2019 banking sector crisis?
2. What specific communication channels and strategies did the government use to manage the banking crisis in Accra?

3. What is the level of satisfaction among affected residents in Accra concerning the government's communication strategies during the financial sector reforms?
4. What crisis communication challenges did government institutions face in informing the public in Accra during the banking sector clean-up?

1.7 Significance of the Study

The results of this study held significant value for stakeholders in public communication, financial management, and policy implementation. The Bank of Ghana (BoG) stands to benefit from insights into how crisis communication during the 2019 financial sector reforms influenced public perception and trust. This finding is aimed at guiding the development of future communication strategies that are more transparent, emotionally engaging, and well-timed. By understanding how the public interpreted and reacted to reform messages, BoG will be better equipped to manage uncertainty, restore confidence, and sustain trust during future financial crises.

The study further provided practical implications for government institutions, especially the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Information. It offers recommendations for designing strategic communication frameworks that addressed public concerns, manage expectations, and tailor messages to diverse audiences. Businesses can also draw lessons from this research to develop effective contingency communication plans for policy changes, regulatory shifts, or emergency directives, thereby minimizing misinformation and public panic. Program managers, spokespersons, and information officers will gain a deeper understanding of how message tone, timing, and media choice influence public behaviour, confidence, and compliance.

Moreover, the study is to benefit citizens and civil society organizations by identifying the types of information people seek, their preferred media platforms, and their emotional responses during periods of crisis. These insights empowered the public to advocate for more transparent, responsive,

and empathetic communication from authorities during national emergencies. Policymakers, including the Governor of the Bank of Ghana, the Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Information, can utilize the findings to understand how communication practices build or erode institutional trust, thereby improving governance and accountability.

Finally, the study contributed to academic scholarship by enriching the body of knowledge on crisis communication within the Global South, offering an empirical case from Ghana's financial sector. It provided a foundation for students and researchers in communication, public policy, finance, and development studies to examine the intersection between media strategies, public trust, and institutional effectiveness. Furthermore, it opened new pathways for comparative research across different countries and crisis contexts, deepening theoretical understanding of media performance, public perception, and government communication in times of reform.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The study is delimited to examining the 2019 financial sector reform in Ghana, with particular focus on the collapse, consolidation, and closure of selected banks and microfinance institutions. It primarily investigated the crisis communication strategies adopted by the Government of Ghana and the Bank of Ghana during this reform period, assessing how these communication efforts influenced public perception, trust, and understanding of the reform process.

Geographically, the study focused on two major urban centres, Accra and Kumasi, where the effects of the reform were most pronounced. These cities were selected because they host a large concentration of financial institutions, diverse populations, and active media engagement, making them ideal for capturing varied public reactions to the government's communication strategies.

Thematically, the study is confined to the communication aspects of the reform, specifically how government messages were formulated, transmitted, and received by the public. It does not examine the financial health or operational performance of the affected institutions, nor the legal frameworks of license revocations. Instead, the study emphasized on the timeliness, clarity, and trustworthiness of official communication, as well as the public's responses in terms of trust, confidence, and behavioural reactions.

Temporally, the study spanned the period from 2017 to 2020, covering the buildup to the financial sector crisis, the implementation of the reform measures, and the early post-reform phase. This timeframe captures the evolution of communication practices and public sentiment throughout the crisis lifecycle.

Methodologically, the study adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative survey data with qualitative insights from interviews to ensure both statistical representation and contextual depth. The design allowed for triangulation of findings and enhanced the reliability and validity of the conclusions drawn.

While the study provided valuable insights into government crisis communication within Ghana's financial sector, it is limited by its contextual focus and may not fully generalize to other national settings. Nonetheless, its findings have significant implications for crisis communication, institutional trust-building, and policy transparency in similar developing-country contexts.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

As with any research, the study encounters a few limitations that affected its breadth and depth. One key limitation is the sensitive nature of the subject. Financial loss, job insecurity, and institutional failure were emotionally charged topics, and some potential respondents were

reluctant to speak openly choose to withhold their true feelings out of fear, trauma, and political caution. This resulted in data that lacks some richness and candour, despite efforts to create a safe and anonymous space for dialogue.

Another constraint that arose from the retrospective nature of the study was that, since the events being analysed occurred in 2019, some participants struggled to recall specific details, feelings, and media messages they encountered at the time, introducing a potential for recall bias (Kothari, 2004). In addition, the study focused on urban areas, specifically Accra and Kumasi, meaning that insights from rural communities, which relied on different information sources or had distinct experiences, were not directly captured. As Acheampong (2020) notes, communication access and interpretation often vary significantly between urban and rural populations, which could limit the generalisability of findings beyond the study areas.

1.10 Organization of the Study

The study was structured into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the study and presents the background, problem statement, research objectives, and significance. Chapter Two provides a comprehensive review of existing literature and theoretical frameworks. Chapter Three details the research methodology, including the design, sampling, and data collection procedures. Chapter Four presents and discusses research findings. Chapter Five summarizes key findings and offers conclusions and recommendations.

1.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the study's context by outlining the significance of the financial sector to Ghana's economy, the genesis and effects of the 2019 banking crisis, and the crucial role communication played during the period. It also clearly articulated the research problem,

objectives, questions, and the significance of the study. The next chapter reviews literature related to financial crises, crisis communication strategies, and public trust in governance.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter Two examines important theories, concepts, and empirical studies related to public perception and communication strategies during financial crises. It lays a foundation for understanding how these elements relate to the 2019 financial sector reforms in Ghana. The chapter is divided into five sections: theoretical framework, key concepts, empirical studies, conceptual framework, and a summary of main insights.

2.2 Overview of the Chapter

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the relevant theoretical and empirical literature regarding the study. It begins with an examination of the theoretical foundations supporting the research focus, followed by an explanation of how these theories relate to the current study. The review then summarizes existing empirical research on crisis communication and government responses to disruptions in the financial sector, emphasizing the gaps that this study aims to fill.

The chapter continues with an explanation of the conceptual framework guiding the research. This framework is based on the key ideas of crisis communication, government transparency, stakeholder engagement, and public trust in financial policy implementation. The study aims to create a clear structure that links past research with the current goals.

Finally, the chapter includes an operational definition of key terms and concludes with a summary. This chapter lays the groundwork for a meaningful inquiry into how the 2019 banking sector clean-up in Ghana was communicated and received by the public by situating the study within existing

scholarly discourse and identifying how the research contributes to both academic and policy debates,

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two key theories: Crisis Communication Theory (CCT) and the Situational Theory of Publics (STP).

2.3.1 Crisis Communication Theory (CCT)

Crisis Communication Theory (CCT), developed by Timothy Coombs in 2007, provides both a practical and theoretical perspective for understanding how organizations handle communication during unexpected, high-stakes events that threaten their credibility or relationships with stakeholders. Fundamentally, the theory emphasizes the importance of not only responding to a crisis but doing so in a way that maintains public trust, reassures stakeholders, and safeguards organizational reputation (Coombs, 2007). Communication during a crisis must therefore be strategic, intentional, and attentive to the emotional and informational needs of those affected. In this study, the theory serves as a basis for evaluating how effectively government communication during the 2019 financial crisis adhered to best practices in crisis management.

According to Coombs, CCT centers on three main communication strategies: instructing information, adjusting information, and reputation repair. Instructing information gives the public key details about what actions to take for their safety or benefit. Adjusting information aims to help people manage the crisis emotionally, such as showing empathy or acknowledging their losses. Lastly, reputation repair involves delivering appropriate messages to rebuild public confidence and restore credibility after the crisis ends (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). These strategies should be tailored to the type of crisis and the audience involved. Therefore, the theory directly supports the first and second research objectives: to understand Ghanaians' general views on the banking crisis

and to identify the communication channels and strategies used during the crisis. CCT helps define what makes crisis communication effective and offers standards for assessing government responses.

The importance of CCT becomes even more crucial during financial crises, when misinformation and panic can spread quickly, eroding the public's trust. Heath and O'Hair (2020) argue that effective crisis communication must be timely, accurate, and consistent to counter rumours and prevent unnecessary fear. Any delay or conflicting information can easily be seen as dishonesty or incompetence, making the crisis worse than it initially was. This is especially true in situations involving people's money or financial security, where emotions run high and trust in institutions is fragile. This theoretical insight supports the third goal of the study: to evaluate how satisfied Ghanaians are with government communication. Using CCT, the study can gauge public satisfaction not only through message content but also by assessing how clear, timely, and emotionally sensitive those messages are.

In the context of the 2019 financial sector reform in Ghana, the CCT offers a useful framework for analysing how the government, particularly institutions like the Bank of Ghana and the Ministry of Finance, handled public communication. With over 347 microfinance institutions and 23 savings and loans companies affected, many Ghanaians were left confused, angry, and unsure about the safety of their funds (Bank of Ghana, 2019). The government's role went beyond regulation; it also had to engage in crisis communication to inform the public, address their worries, and work to restore trust. This matches the fourth research goal: to analyse the challenges the government faced in crisis communication during the banking crisis. Using CCT, the study can evaluate whether the government successfully fulfilled its communication responsibilities in managing public expectations and transparency.

Applying CCT to this study enables a structured assessment of whether the government used instructing information (such as timelines and refund procedures), adjusting information (like showing empathy or acknowledging distress), and reputation repair strategies (such as public apologies or regulatory reforms). As Jin, Pang, and Cameron (2012) observe, public responses to crisis messages are influenced not only by what is communicated but also by how it is communicated and who delivers it. Therefore, the credibility of messengers, clarity of language, and tone of communication become vital indicators of effectiveness. These elements will guide the analysis of communication strategies' effectiveness and gaps used by public institutions, supporting the study's evaluative and interpretive objectives.

Additionally, CCT emphasises that crises do not just disrupt systems; they expose institutional strengths or weaknesses in communicating with the public (Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2011). In the Ghanaian context, this theory helps analyse the effectiveness of crisis messaging and its impact on public perception, trust in financial institutions, and the overall legitimacy of government-led reforms. Applying Crisis Communication Theory (CCT) enables the study to highlight past communication shortcomings while providing a framework for improving public engagement, transparency, and institutional accountability in future financial sector reforms or similar crises.

2.3.2 Situational Theory of Publics (STP)

The Situational Theory of Publics (STP), developed by James E. Grunig in 1984, provides a useful perspective for understanding how and why people engage with public issues, especially during times of uncertainty or crisis. The theory indicates that not all members of the public respond to the same message in the same way. Instead, people's reactions depend on three main factors: their recognition of the problem, their level of constraint in addressing it, and their perceived involvement (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Kim & Grunig, 2011). These factors help categorise

individuals into four groups: non-publics, latent publics, aware publics, and active publics. This typology offers a solid foundation for addressing the study's first research goal, to understand Ghanaians' general views on the banking crisis, as it allows for dividing responses into different levels of engagement based on citizens' awareness and sense of urgency.

In Ghana's 2019 financial sector reforms, which involved closing and consolidating several financial institutions, STP became especially relevant. The crisis affected thousands of depositors who faced uncertainty about their savings and future financial security (Bank of Ghana, 2019). However, the public did not respond uniformly; some actively sought answers through protests, lawsuits, or social media campaigns, while others remained passive or confused.

STP explains this disparity in public reaction by positing that engagement is influenced by perceived problem relevance and efficacy in influencing outcomes (Grunig et al., 2002; Ni & Kim, 2009). It supports the study's second objective, to identify the communication strategies and channels used during the crisis, by guiding the evaluation of whether messages were appropriately crafted and targeted to the specific needs and characteristics of different publics.

Importantly, STP asserts that communication does not automatically trigger public action. Rather, public engagement depends on both cognitive awareness and perceived behavioural capacity (Kim & Grunig, 2011). Many Ghanaians who were directly impacted by the reforms and believed they had the power to demand accountability became "active publics." Conversely, individuals with no direct stakes or those who believed their voices would not be heard were more likely to remain passive (Sha & Dozier, 2012). This helps address the third research objective, to assess the level of satisfaction with government communication, by demonstrating that satisfaction varies not only with message content but also with the perceived opportunity to engage or influence the outcome.

The variable of constraint recognition, as highlighted by Grunig and Repper (1992), is essential in explaining how barriers such as poor digital literacy, limited access to media, or socioeconomic exclusion can hinder engagement, even among those who recognise a problem. This became evident in the Ghanaian case, particularly in rural areas where affected persons lacked access to timely and reliable information. As Heath and Palenchar (2009) argue, effective public communication must overcome structural constraints to foster meaningful participation. Poor segmentation of audiences and generalised messaging by state institutions may have deepened confusion, fear, and alienation (Vardeman-Winter & Tindall, 2010; Yang & Lim, 2009). These insights contribute to the fourth research objective, to explore the government's communication challenges, by highlighting gaps in inclusivity, clarity, and responsiveness during the crisis.

Moreover, scholars such as Jahng and Hong (2017) emphasise the importance of audience-centred communication, where messages are tailored to address the information needs, emotional states, and media access of each public segment. In Ghana's case, many public responses were shaped not only by message clarity but also by who delivered the message and how credible they appeared (Macnamara, 2012). The government's top-down, non-participatory communication approach ignored the layered nature of public awareness, inadvertently excluding vulnerable and less connected publics (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). As Kent and Taylor (2002) advocate, effective public communication must integrate dialogic principles, which emphasise feedback, empathy, and mutual understanding.

Therefore, Situational Theory of Publics is a valuable framework for analysing communication effectiveness during the 2019 financial sector reforms. It shows that public perception and action are not homogeneous, but are shaped by how informed, empowered, and involved people feel. This theory moves beyond a static understanding of audiences and introduces a dynamic model

that emphasises situational factors and behavioural triggers (Grunig, 2009; Kim, Ni, & Sha, 2008). It not only strengthens the theoretical foundation of this study but also reinforces the need for strategic, inclusive, and responsive communication practices in times of national crises.

2.4 Review of Concepts and Key Issues

2.4.1 The Role of the banking sector in Development

The banking sector plays a foundational role in economic development by mobilising savings, facilitating capital formation, and providing financial intermediation services. According to Acheampong and Antwi-Asare (2021), the capacity of banks to allocate credit efficiently to productive sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, and services directly influences national output and job creation. Banks serve as the main conduits through which monetary policy affects the real economy, primarily by adjusting interest rates and influencing investment behaviour. In developing economies such as Ghana, banks act as a stabilising force, helping to reduce informal financial practices and expand access to formal credit, which in turn empowers small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) to scale and innovate (Tawiah & Obeng, 2022).

In addition to capital allocation, banks are central to promoting financial inclusion and reducing poverty. Recent studies have emphasised that increased access to banking services, especially savings and credit products, has a direct impact on the ability of households to manage risk and invest in long-term assets such as education and housing (Boamah & Adusei, 2023). The expansion of mobile and digital banking platforms, supported by traditional banks, has further enhanced access to financial tools in underserved rural communities (Dzansi & Koomson, 2022). As financial infrastructure improves, more individuals can participate in the formal economy, thereby increasing tax revenue and reducing dependency on informal lending networks that often impose exorbitant interest rates.

However, the developmental role of banks can be undermined by systemic weaknesses such as poor regulatory oversight, inadequate risk management, and political interference. A study by Ofori-Atta and Kyei (2021) on Ghana's pre-reform banking sector revealed that the proliferation of undercapitalised institutions contributed to inefficiencies, high non-performing loans (NPLs), and eroded public confidence in the sector. The situation was compounded by weak governance frameworks and a lack of transparency in credit allocation, often resulting in crony lending and liquidity mismatches (Asiedu-Mante & Mensah, 2020). These systemic flaws not only constrain economic development but also discourage both domestic and foreign investment due to heightened financial risk.

Therefore, banking sector reforms, such as those undertaken in Ghana in 2017–2019, are crucial to revitalising the developmental potential of financial institutions. When well-implemented, reforms can restore confidence, enhance solvency, and reorient banks toward their core role as facilitators of sustainable development (Mensah & Tetteh, 2023). Policymakers must focus on strengthening regulatory compliance, enhancing corporate governance, and investing in digital banking infrastructure to improve resilience and efficiency (Adu & Abor, 2024). Ultimately, a well-regulated and inclusive banking sector serves as a pillar for inclusive growth, macroeconomic stability, and national development.

2.4.2 Crisis Communication

Crisis communication refers to the timely exchange of information between organisations and stakeholders during periods of emergency or uncertainty. According to Reynolds and Seeger (2005), effective crisis communication aims to reduce confusion, provide guidance, and calm public anxiety. In the context of Ghana's 2019 financial sector reforms, this concept becomes crucial for understanding how institutions like the Bank of Ghana and the Ministry of Finance

navigated public outcry and speculation. Crisis communication goes beyond issuing press releases; it requires a deliberate, transparent, and empathetic strategy to manage public perception and reinforce institutional credibility (Coombs, 2007).

The success or failure of crisis communication hinges on how well an organisation anticipates information needs and provides clear, consistent updates. Heath and O’Hair (2020) stress the importance of coherence and timing, noting that delays or inconsistencies can fuel rumours and diminish trust. This was evident during the reform period when delayed updates left many Ghanaians uncertain about the safety of their savings. Scholars like Seeger, et al. (2003) emphasise that in high-stakes situations, communication should not just focus on facts but also acknowledge emotions and provide actionable guidance to the public.

In this study, crisis communication is analysed to determine how well government institutions conveyed essential details about the reform process. It evaluates the tone, language, platforms, and frequency of messages disseminated. As argued by Frandsen and Johansen (2010), crisis responses must reflect institutional responsibility while also being audience-centred. The Ghanaian case presents an opportunity to assess how the balance between information and emotional reassurance was handled. Understanding the quality of crisis communication offers insights into how public confidence was either preserved or compromised.

2.4.3 Financial Sector Reform

Financial sector reform refers to a series of regulatory interventions aimed at enhancing the stability, transparency, and efficiency of financial systems (Kwakye, 2013; World Bank, 2020). Such reforms often target undercapitalised institutions, poor governance structures, and systemic inefficiencies. In the context of emerging economies, reforms serve a dual purpose: bolstering investor confidence while also protecting vulnerable depositors (Gatsi & Antwi, 2019; IMF, 2021).

Ghana's 2019 financial sector reform, dubbed the "clean-up", resulted in the revocation of licenses from over 400 institutions, including savings and loans companies, microfinance firms, and some indigenous banks (Bank of Ghana, 2020). While the intention was to restore financial discipline, scholars argue that the speed and scale of the reforms magnified their disruptive potential (Aryeetey, 2020; Quartey et al., 2022; Boamah & Ofori-Abebrese, 2021).

The impact of the reforms was immediate and far-reaching. Thousands of depositors found themselves unable to access their funds, while many employees of collapsed institutions were rendered unemployed (Adu & Osei-Assibey, 2021; Ghana Deposit Protection Corporation, 2021). What began as a technical and economic decision evolved into a public crisis of trust and livelihood disruption, Beck and Levine (2004) argue that financial system stability cannot rely solely on quantitative indicators like capital adequacy and liquidity ratios; it must also be supported by the psychological assurance of stakeholders. This is echoed by Atuahene-Gima and Boamah (2023), who observed that sudden reforms, if not accompanied by adequate social cushioning and communication, often lead to widespread scepticism and resistance. Furthermore, Bawumia (2019) stressed the need to contextualise macroeconomic policies within Ghana's socio-political environment to mitigate backlash and panic.

These developments reveal that financial sector reform is as much a communication issue as it is a regulatory one. According to Mishkin (2006), successful reform depends on stakeholder inclusion, clarity of goals, and phased implementation that allows for adaptive responses. The 2019 clean-up, however, was criticised for lacking participatory processes, with limited engagement between regulators and the public (Afhre, 2021; Owusu-Mensah & Arthur, 2020). Many Ghanaians received news of the closures through third-party media, contributing to misinformation and anxiety (Teye & Frempong, 2022). As noted by Asiedu-Akrofi (2020), reforms should not only

aim at long-term institutional sustainability but also consider short-term emotional and social impacts. Without mechanisms for restitution, explanation, and listening, even technically sound reforms may be interpreted as arbitrary or hostile (Boateng & Baah, 2021).

This study adopts financial sector reform as a foundational concept to analyse the broader implications of economic restructuring on public trust, communication strategies, and governance legitimacy. It interrogates whether the 2019 clean-up was carried out with a clear communications architecture that accounted for public sentiment, emotional well-being, and socioeconomic displacement (Darko & Amponsah, 2022; Dzrmedo & Nyarko, 2022). By doing so, the research situates financial reform not just as a fiscal exercise but as a social and political one that demands participatory dialogue and accountability. Evaluating the reform through this lens is crucial for determining whether the Ghanaian state sought to preserve its economic stability at the expense of its social contract, or whether it strived to balance both in a time of profound national transition (Amoako & Gatsi, 2022; Osei, 2023).

2.4.5 Trust in Government

Trust in government is commonly defined as the belief that public institutions will operate with fairness, competence, and accountability (OECD, 2017). It serves as a cornerstone of democratic governance and plays a pivotal role in shaping citizen compliance, especially in times of crisis. During national emergencies or systemic reforms, such as Ghana's 2019 financial sector clean-up, the level of public trust becomes a determining factor in the overall success of state interventions (Blind, 2007; Mishler & Rose, 2001). When citizens believe that government decisions are made with integrity and in the public interest, they are more inclined to accept difficult policies, even when those policies entail personal loss or hardship (Levi & Stoker, 2000). In contrast, low trust

can trigger resistance, civil unrest, misinformation, and disengagement, compounding the crisis (Bertsou, 2019; Seligson, 2002; Van de Walle, 2017).

The abrupt closure of several financial institutions during the reforms caught many Ghanaians by surprise, prompting accusations of political bias and poor communication. According to Bouckaert and Van de Walle (2003), trust deteriorates when public authorities appear opaque or act unilaterally without adequate consultation or explanation. Citizens who had invested their savings with licensed banks and microfinance institutions felt blindsided by the sudden regulatory decisions. For many, the government's failure to offer timely, detailed, and culturally appropriate explanations led to perceptions of neglect or elitism (Amoako & Gatsi, 2022; Ninsin, 2020). Empirical work by Ackah and Teye (2021) suggests that even well-intentioned reforms can appear punitive or suspicious if not communicated with empathy and transparency. This aligns with Easton's (1965) classic argument that diffuse trust, once eroded, is much harder to restore than specific trust based on policy satisfaction.

A growing body of research emphasises that the tone, clarity, and responsiveness of government communication are central to building or eroding public trust. Hetherington and Husser (2012) argue that in crises, government messaging must go beyond fact-sharing to demonstrate emotional resonance, fairness, and reassurance. In Ghana, the initial press briefings and circulars lacked consistency, and few offered forums for public feedback (Asante & Frempong, 2021; Ghana Integrity Initiative, 2020). This undermined public confidence, particularly among those who felt excluded from policy discussions or feared that the reforms were designed to target specific financial institutions. As noted by Christensen and Lægheid (2005), trust during crises is not just a function of the message's content but also of the messenger's perceived legitimacy and willingness to engage. Without dialogue, the state risks alienating the very constituencies it intends to support.

This study examines the extent to which trust in government was either strengthened or weakened by its communication during the financial sector reforms. The research draws on frameworks from crisis communication and political psychology to assess whether citizens perceived the government as transparent, empathetic, and competent in its crisis response (Coombs, 2007; Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2013). It will explore whether government actors acknowledged public fears, provided timely updates, and clarified the rationale for their actions. Studies by Dzramedo and Nyarko (2022) and Owusu-Mensah (2023) demonstrate that public trust increases when communication is two-way and culturally contextualised. Ultimately, the reform experience in Ghana offers a case study in how trust is not only built through effective policy but also through strategic, sincere, and inclusive communication efforts.

2.4.6 Media Channels and Their Role in Public Communication

Media channels refer to the various platforms used to disseminate information to the public, including traditional outlets like radio, television, and newspapers, as well as digital platforms such as social media, websites, and messaging apps. These channels shape public understanding by influencing how people perceive issues and react to them (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 2006). According to McQuail (2010), the effectiveness of a media channel depends on its ability to match the media habits, language preferences, and trust levels of the audience. In crises, media channels do not merely transmit information; they help shape public behaviour, reduce uncertainty, and influence emotional responses (Coombs, 2007; Heath & O’Hair, 2020). In Ghana, this interplay became critical during the 2019 financial sector clean-up, where both official and unofficial platforms were used to reach different demographics (Adomako & Danso, 2021).

Traditional media such as radio and television continue to play a dominant role in public communication across Ghana, especially in peri-urban and rural areas. Radio remains a highly

trusted and accessible medium, with local language stations increasing inclusivity and comprehension (Oppong & Frempong, 2021). Studies have shown that over 70% of Ghanaian households regularly consume radio content for updates on national issues, including banking and financial developments (Gadugah & Anokye, 2020; Ghana Statistical Service, 2020). Print newspapers and national TV broadcasts also retain some influence, especially among older adults and literate populations (Mensah & Owusu, 2022). However, these platforms often lack the immediacy, interactivity, and viral potential of digital media. In the financial crisis context, the delayed broadcast of key information on traditional media was cited by many citizens as a source of confusion and frustration (BudgIT Ghana, 2022).

Digital platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter increasingly shape how citizens engage with governance and crisis-related information. According to Tufekci (2015), social media facilitates real-time dissemination and allows audiences to co-create narratives, thereby amplifying marginalised voices. Yet, the unregulated nature of digital media introduces significant risks of misinformation and disinformation (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). During the financial reforms in Ghana, misinformation spread quickly via WhatsApp, causing panic among depositors and misinterpretations of government actions (Asare & Tetteh, 2021). Studies by Dzrmedo and Nyarko (2022) found that only 18% of users cross-verified information from social media with official sources, making digital rumour control a challenge. The Ministry of Finance and the Bank of Ghana's attempts to clarify issues via Facebook and Twitter often failed to reach the most affected audiences due to digital literacy gaps (Afriyie & Boateng, 2021; Ahiabenu, 2022).

A comprehensive communication strategy during crises requires both multi-channel integration and an understanding of audience segmentation. Lazarsfeld and Berelson (1948) emphasised that media messages are most effective when mediated by trusted figures and adapted to the

communication preferences of subgroups. In line with this, Osei and Adjei (2023) advocate for a hybrid communication strategy in Ghana, combining traditional broadcasts with SMS, infographics, and targeted digital campaigns. Feedback loops, such as call-in radio shows and social media comment threads, enhance interactivity and allow government institutions to monitor public perception in real-time (Jin et al., 2012; Vardeman-Winter & Tindall, 2010). Ultimately, as Heath and O’Hair (2020) argue, successful crisis communication is not just about disseminating facts; it involves building trust, acknowledging emotions, and promoting transparency. The Ghanaian financial reform case offers a practical lens for evaluating how well government messaging aligned with these principles and leveraged the strengths of available media channels.

2.5 Empirical Review

Objective 1: General Views of Residents in Accra

Osei and Mensah (2021) conducted a structured survey involving 250 residents living in and around Accra’s Central Business District, aiming to gauge their perceptions and emotional responses during the 2019 financial sector reforms. Their study was motivated by the need to understand how systemic economic changes affected the confidence of ordinary people. The research revealed a wide array of reactions. While a significant segment of participants acknowledged the reforms as necessary for cleansing the financial system and restoring regulatory compliance, others interpreted the closures and consolidations of banks as abrupt, opaque, and economically damaging, particularly for lower-income earners and informal sector actors.

The researchers structured the survey to capture both quantitative and qualitative data. When asked to rate their level of agreement with statements about the fairness, transparency, and necessity of the reforms, 60% of respondents agreed that the measures were technically justified. However, only 34% felt that the authorities had communicated these intentions and processes clearly. This

notable gap between technical justification and perceived transparency suggests that communication failures can undermine even well-intentioned policies. The researchers argued that successful reform implementation in a public context requires more than sound economic rationale; it demands clarity, empathy, and open dialogue (Obeng & Agyei, 2022; Osei & Mensah, 2021).

The open-ended responses added depth to the findings. Many respondents expressed emotional discomfort and confusion, indicating that they had accepted the reforms as necessary but still felt abandoned by the state due to the lack of accessible and credible information. This emotional dissonance aligns with Akpene-Mawusi (2022), who emphasised that perceptions of legitimacy are often driven by how people feel they are being treated, not only by the content of government action but by its delivery. These sentiments are central to Objective 1, as they expose the underlying psychological and social factors that influenced the general public's view of the financial sector clean-up.

Adarkwa and Boateng (2022) conducted in-depth interviews with 50 low-income and vulnerable residents of Accra, including market women, commercial drivers, and small-scale artisans. The qualitative nature of this research allowed the authors to unpack the lived experiences of individuals who felt the immediate effects of the financial shake-up. The researchers found overwhelming evidence of financial anxiety and mistrust. Many participants were unsure if they would ever recover funds from savings and loans companies that had been dissolved. This created deep emotional strain, with many fearing that they had permanently lost their economic safety nets.

The study highlighted how these financial uncertainties quickly morphed into broader distrust of financial institutions and government regulators. Participants frequently stated that they no longer trusted any microfinance institution, regardless of its registration status, for fear that the same situation could repeat itself. One respondent noted, "I don't know who to believe anymore,"

underscoring the extent to which the crisis had eroded trust, not just in specific banks but in the entire regulatory framework. This distrust aligns with observations from Acheampong et al. (2023), who argue that financial crises in developing economies often extend their effects beyond economic indicators to social institutions.

Through these personal narratives, the study provides rich insight into Objective 1 by showcasing how average residents perceived the government's role in the reforms. The emotional texture of the interviews, ranging from cautious hope to despair, shows that reforms are judged not only on outcomes but on the process and the degree of engagement with citizens. These findings suggest that any future policy in the financial sector must account for the emotional intelligence required to navigate public sentiment and not simply rely on technocratic language or unilateral decision-making (Adarkwa & Boateng, 2022; Teye, 2023).

Forson and Gyimah-Boadi (2024) conducted a qualitative inquiry using focus group discussions involving 60 residents from diverse occupational and socio-economic backgrounds in Accra, including teachers, petty traders, pensioners, and artisans. Their objective was to capture the deeper sentiments surrounding the banking sector reforms. The participants voiced a dual perception: while many acknowledged that the reforms were economically necessary to prevent a systemic collapse, they were deeply dissatisfied with the government's approach to citizen engagement. This tension between economic logic and communicative discontent paints a complex picture of public opinion, highlighting that perceptions of policy are shaped not only by what is done but also by how it is done. Many respondents expressed that the reform process, although possibly justified, felt imposed rather than participatory.

The study revealed a recurring emotional theme: a sense of exclusion from decision-making and communication processes. Participants explained that although they were aware of the banking

sector's challenges, the government's one-way communication style, through press releases and rigid announcements, left them feeling "talked at" instead of "spoken with." This criticism echoed the findings of Darko and Owusu (2021), who warned that ignoring public engagement during high-stakes institutional transitions often breeds resentment and mistrust, regardless of the technical success of the intervention. Several focus group members even indicated that they would have accepted temporary sacrifices more readily if they had been informed early and honestly about the risks. These narratives underscore the public's desire for transparency, empathy, and inclusion in the policymaking process.

In terms of policy relevance, Forson and Gyimah-Boadi's findings strongly reinforce the purpose of Objective 1. They provide concrete evidence that public sentiment is not merely a reflection of economic conditions, but also a result of how policies are introduced, explained, and justified. Public support for reforms cannot be assumed based on macroeconomic logic alone, it must be earned through meaningful communication and involvement. The study's value lies in its ability to spotlight voices that are often overlooked in quantitative surveys. These lived experiences reflect broader patterns of institutional mistrust, emotional distress, and communication failure, offering crucial insights into how future reform initiatives can foster greater legitimacy and social cohesion in Accra and beyond.

Objective 2: Communication Channels and Strategies Used During the Financial Reforms

Eyifah (2021) investigated how Accra residents accessed and evaluated information during the financial sector reform process, surveying 300 individuals from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The study identified WhatsApp (82%) and Facebook (68%) as the two most popular platforms for receiving updates related to reform. However, despite their popularity, these platforms were not perceived as entirely trustworthy. Most participants noted that they often

received contradictory information or unverified rumours through these channels, which made it difficult to discern fact from fiction.

This widespread reliance on social media, despite its flaws, was linked to the failure of government and financial institutions to provide timely and consistent information. Eyifah (2021) pointed out that only 12% of respondents used official websites or financial newsletters for updates. This gap indicates a breakdown in communication between institutions and the public, particularly in delivering messages through trusted and accessible channels. The author stressed that government communication should have been more adaptable, especially considering the different levels of digital literacy among the population (Ayim & Asare, 2022).

The study's recommendations are closely linked to Objective 2, calling on policymakers and regulators to use a multi-channel approach that includes SMS broadcasts, community radio, and local information centres, along with digital platforms. Not customizing communication strategies for different demographic groups may have increased confusion and public disengagement. As Boateng and Antwi-Boasiako (2020) also note, effective public communication requires not just reach but also resonance, messages need to be clear and relatable across cultural and technological boundaries. Eyifah's research, therefore, highlights the essential need for diverse and inclusive communication strategies during policy crises.

BudgIT Ghana (2022) carried out a comprehensive participatory study involving over 3,000 residents across various Accra suburbs using community town halls, digital surveys, and local radio engagement. The goal was to evaluate public understanding of and trust in financial reforms and to identify which communication channels were most effective. The study revealed that traditional radio, especially Starr FM (93%), was the most accessed and trusted source for updates

on the financial sector. These results highlight that, even in the digital age, traditional media still commands trust, particularly among older and lower-income populations.

Through its outreach programs, BudgIT observed that radio segments that included citizen call-ins significantly increased community engagement and message retention. Participants were more likely to remember and trust financial messages when they were broadcast in local languages and delivered by familiar voices. The research supports the argument that interactivity and linguistic relevance are critical elements in government communication. This aligns with the conclusions of Koomson and Dery (2023), who found that participatory media approaches greatly enhance public trust and information uptake during national policy implementations.

BudgIT's research is therefore pivotal in meeting Objective 2, as it not only identifies effective communication channels but also outlines principles of best practice. The findings suggest that to build credibility and enhance public understanding, communicators must integrate multiple formats and ensure that messages are culturally and linguistically appropriate. As such, any reform-related communication in Ghana should not treat the population as a homogeneous audience but rather apply targeted segmentation strategies, echoing best practices in crisis communication theory (BudgIT Ghana, 2022; Vordzogbe & Sackey, 2022).

Aboagye and Boakye (2022) conducted a comprehensive survey involving 400 residents across various districts of Accra to investigate the communication channels citizens relied upon during the 2019 banking sector clean-up. Their findings revealed that WhatsApp (79%) and FM radio (76%) were the most frequently used sources of information, far surpassing traditional government platforms such as official websites, which accounted for a mere 10% usage rate. This disparity highlights the population's trust in fast-access peer-to-peer communication and long-standing audio platforms over static institutional portals. The study supports earlier conclusions drawn by

Eyifah (2021) yet strengthens the case with a broader sample base and refined analytical rigour. These findings underscore that the public gravitated toward instantaneous and conversational forms of communication, pointing to a critical need for institutional alignment with citizens' media preferences.

In addition to usage patterns, Aboagye and Boakye (2022) investigated how residents evaluated the credibility and usefulness of these channels. Participants noted that while social media, especially WhatsApp, provided real-time updates, it also amplified misinformation, panic, and conspiracy theories, especially in the absence of official rebuttals. Conversely, FM radio was perceived as more credible and calming, particularly when expert guests were featured on public affairs programs. However, the delayed nature of radio updates meant citizens were often already misinformed before accurate information reached them. In response, the authors recommended a multi-pronged strategy: combining the immediacy of digital platforms with the trust and reach of radio, while ensuring message consistency across all platforms. They also proposed the use of government-backed SMS broadcasts as an intermediary solution, bridging the gap between formality and accessibility.

These insights are directly aligned with the achievement of Objective 2, which seeks to identify the specific channels and strategies deployed during the banking crisis. By empirically documenting how communication was received and interpreted, not just how it was disseminated, the study provides a grounded perspective on what worked, what didn't, and why. It shows that the effectiveness of government communication lies not only in the channels chosen but also in how messages are curated, contextualised, and trusted. Therefore, the research by Aboagye and Boakye offers a valuable roadmap for public institutions seeking to craft future crisis

communication strategies that are both inclusive and effective, especially in dynamic urban environments like Accra.

Objective 3: To assess the level of satisfaction among affected residents of Accra regarding the government's communication strategies during the financial sector reforms

In a study conducted by Mensima and Asare (2020), a cross-sectional survey of 400 residents in Adabraka, Madina, and Nima was used to assess public satisfaction with communication during the banking crisis. Results showed that only 28% of respondents felt "very satisfied" with how the government communicated policy changes. Notably, over 47% expressed dissatisfaction, citing the late dissemination of information and an over-reliance on English-language communication channels that failed to address vernacular needs.

The study's qualitative feedback revealed sentiments of exclusion and confusion. Respondents frequently mentioned that they heard about reforms "too late" or through "unclear language" that did not simplify the crisis (Mensima & Asare, 2020). These insights signal a disconnection between government communicators and the informational needs of the average urban resident—pointing to flaws not in intent, but in the execution of strategy.

Mensima and Asare's work is instrumental in contextualising Objective 3. Their findings indicate that technical content alone does not equate to satisfaction; emotional clarity, language accessibility, and timeliness are equally important. Therefore, their research serves as a guidepost for evaluating satisfaction not just through what was said, but how and when it was communicated.

In another study, Teye and Addo (2023) employed focus group discussions and online surveys to assess perceptions of government communication among individuals whose banks were directly closed. Participants came from Lapaz, Kasoa, and East Legon. The results indicated that while some respondents (especially educated professionals) acknowledged the government's effort to

inform the public, 68% of participants reported that the communication lacked empathy and “seemed overly technical.”

The focus group component highlighted that the emotional tone of government statements mattered as much as the facts. One participant noted, “They talked like we were economists. What about the ordinary people?” (Teye & Addo, 2023). This points to a communicative blind spot: the government assumed that more information meant better understanding, ignoring how tone, delivery, and contextualization affect satisfaction levels.

Teye and Addo’s (2023) study is highly relevant to Objective 3. It shows that communication satisfaction is not only about the content, but how that content aligns with people's emotional and cognitive contexts. Their findings strongly support the case for audience-centred communication strategies in times of financial crisis.

Objective 4: To explore the communication-related challenges faced by government institutions in disseminating crisis information to the public in Accra during the banking sector clean-up

Asiedu and Baffoe (2021) conducted a case study on the Ministry of Finance and Bank of Ghana, interviewing communication officers and analysing press releases between 2017 and 2020. The researchers identified several institutional barriers, including delayed approval processes, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and a lack of inter-agency coordination. These bottlenecks, they argue, prevented real-time dissemination of vital information.

One key challenge highlighted was the lack of a unified communication framework. While the Bank of Ghana would release statements, they were not always synchronised with the Ministry of Finance’s public briefings, leading to contradictions or confusion (Asiedu & Baffoe, 2021). This

discrepancy significantly hampered public trust, especially when updates appeared inconsistent across government platforms.

Their findings are directly relevant to Objective 4. By identifying internal coordination flaws and systemic delays, Asiedu and Baffoe provide a foundation for understanding why official crisis communication in Accra was perceived as disjointed. Their research emphasises the need for streamlined crisis communication structures within public institutions.

In another study, Ocran and Dadzie (2022) evaluated crisis communication barriers using a mixed-methods approach, combining stakeholder interviews with a media content analysis. They found that one of the most pressing issues was the lack of communication capacity at the district and municipal levels. Many Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) lacked trained spokespersons or funding to facilitate real-time community updates.

Their interviews with local administrators in Ga Central, Ayawaso West, and Ablekuma North revealed that although they received directives from the central government, they had neither the tools nor personnel to localise that information effectively (Ocran & Dadzie, 2022). In addition, content analysis showed that only 15% of official statements were translated into major local languages, undermining inclusivity.

This study ties directly into Objective 4 by exposing how logistical and structural constraints undermine effective dissemination. Ocran and Dadzie's (2022) emphasis on grassroots communication gaps underscores the importance of decentralising crisis communication mechanisms to ensure message uniformity and reach.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Crisis Communication Strategies and Public Response

Crisis communication strategies refer to the intentional ways institutions convey information during emergencies. These approaches are built on three core pillars: clarity, tone, and timeliness (Coombs, 2007; Heath & O’Hair, 2020). Clarity ensures that messages are jargon-free and accessible, which is vital when the public is anxious and decisions have personal implications (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005). Tone conveys the emotional posture of the communicator, empathy, authority, or indifference, which significantly affects how messages are received (Covello, 2003; Kim & Grunig, 2011). Timeliness, the speed and consistency of updates, shape public confidence and prevent harmful speculation (Osei-Asibey & Domfeh, 2021; Seeger, 2006;).

During Ghana’s 2019 financial sector reforms, these dimensions were put to the test. The abrupt closure of over 400 institutions created fear and confusion, worsened by vague government messages that many found cold or overly technical (Boateng & Ayamga, 2022; Coombs, 2012). The tone lacked emotional resonance, and delayed updates enabled misinformation to spread, eroding public trust (Darko & Owusu-Mensah, 2022; Tufekci, 2015). As Boamah and Osei-Asare (2021) note, the absence of empathy compounded frustration among affected citizens, many of whom lost savings or employment.

This study integrates Crisis Communication Theory (CCT) and the Situational Theory of Publics (STP) to assess the effectiveness of government communication. CCT highlights the need for instructive, adaptive, and reputation-repair strategies (Coombs, 2007), while STP focuses on audience responsiveness based on their level of problem recognition and involvement (Grunig, 1997). Together, they provide a robust framework for analysing how communication influenced public perception, satisfaction, and behaviour. Ultimately, effective crisis communication in high-

stakes scenarios requires more than information; it must align message content with emotional and social realities (Heath, 2010; Sellnow et al., 2019).

Media Channels

Media channels play a critical role in crisis communication by influencing both the delivery and interpretation of information (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 2006; McQuail, 2010). In Ghana, traditional platforms like radio, television, and newspapers remain essential, particularly for older and rural audiences who rely on these for trusted information (Ampofo, 2016). However, the rapid growth of digital access has made platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter central to public engagement, especially among urban youth (Armah-Attoh, 2022; Kperogi, 2020). During the 2019 banking sector reforms, the extent to which these channels were strategically employed significantly shaped public understanding and trust in the process.

While official statements were often shared through formal press releases, many citizens turned to social media for timely updates (Owusu & Sackey, 2021). This shift allowed for fast information flow but also created openings for misinformation and competing narratives (Boateng & Ayamga, 2022; Tufekci, 2015). Delays in government updates and lack of message clarity on official websites further widened the information gap (Osei-Asibey & Domfeh, 2021). As Pavlik (2008) observes, fragmented messaging weakens institutional control and can heighten public fear and distrust, especially when emotional responses are not adequately managed.

In addition to mass media, interpersonal communication served as a crucial channel for reaching non-digital audiences. Community leaders and local assemblies played mediating roles by translating messages into native languages and culturally resonant formats (Adarkwa & Boateng, 2022; Anokwa et al., 2003; Yankah, 2020). This aligns with Schramm's (1971) assertion that

effective communication occurs when the sender and receiver share a common field of experience. Thus, this study evaluates whether the media channels used during the reforms were inclusive, credible, and responsive to the diverse communication needs of Ghanaian society (Stephens & Malone, 2009).

Relationship Between Communication and Policy Acceptance

The link between government communication and public policy acceptance is a central concern in crisis governance. Effective communication enhances public understanding, fosters trust, and facilitates smoother implementation of reforms (Coombs, 2007; Heath & O'Hair, 2020). In contrast, ambiguous or tone-deaf communication often results in resistance, misinformation, or civil disobedience (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005). The Situational Theory of Publics (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) offers a useful lens for this dynamic, proposing that public responses are shaped by awareness of the issue, perceived involvement, and belief in one's ability to act. In Ghana's banking reforms, these dimensions were directly observable in how various groups either embraced, questioned, or rejected state messages.

Mensah and Asare (2022) note that public support for the financial clean-up was higher in areas where messaging was consistent and framed around citizen protection rather than institutional collapse. This supports the idea that message framing, especially when couched in values such as fairness and security, can encourage compliance (Entman, 2004; Kim et al., 2020). However, Aboagye and Akomea-Frimpong (2020) argue that communities with lower financial literacy or pre-existing distrust in government were more likely to interpret the reforms as elite-driven and punitive. Thus, communication quality directly affected policy legitimacy in the eyes of the public, suggesting a feedback loop between message reception and behavioural alignment.

In practical terms, crisis communication must bridge the policy-intention gap, explaining not just what is being done, but why, how, and for whom (Coombs, 2012; Ulmer et al., 2017). When governments fail to show how reforms benefit ordinary people, they risk alienating those most affected. This was evident in Ghana when thousands of depositors, especially in microfinance institutions, felt abandoned and unheard. The lack of participatory channels, such as town halls or community feedback mechanisms, exacerbated the disconnect (Boateng & Ayamga, 2022). According to Pavlik (2008), without reciprocal communication, crisis policies lack the discursive legitimacy needed for sustained public endorsement.

This section argues that the relationship between communication and policy acceptance is not linear but interactive. The public evaluates reforms not only on technical merit but on communicative justice: was I told, was I respected, was I heard? When communication aligns with people’s values, emotions, and lived experiences, reforms are more likely to succeed. Therefore, this framework supports evaluating not just message frequency or correctness, but whether communication created spaces for empathy, understanding, and shared responsibility, key pillars for public acceptance.

Figure 1.0: Diagram linking the core issues

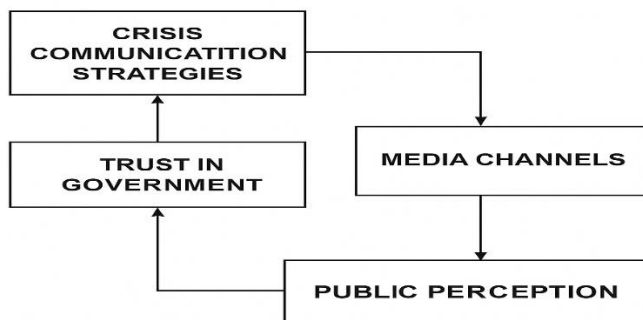


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher’s Construct (2025)

Explanation of Diagram

The diagram above or framework illustrates how crisis communication strategies function as the central mechanism through which the other core elements, media channels, public perception, trust in government, and financial sector reform, interact and influence one another during the 2019 financial sector clean-up in Ghana. The framework is rooted in Crisis Communication Theory (CCT) and the Situational Theory of Publics (STP), both of which guide the interpretation of public responses to state-led financial policy actions (Coombs, 2007; Grunig, 1997).

At the core of the framework is crisis communication, operationalised through instructing, adjusting, and reputation-repair messaging (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). These elements aim to provide safety information, emotional support, and image restoration during crises. In the Ghanaian context, however, studies show that these strategies were inconsistently applied, leading to gaps in public engagement and trust (Boateng & Ayamga, 2022; Osei-Asibey & Domfeh, 2021). The clarity, tone, and timeliness of government messaging are thus critical indicators assessed in this framework (Heath & O’Hair, 2020; Reynolds & Seeger, 2005).

Media channels serve as the conduits through which these crisis messages are delivered. As the diagram shows, traditional media (radio, TV, print) and digital platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter) each have varying levels of reach and credibility (Kperogi, 2020; Ampofo, 2016). Research by BudgIT Ghana (2022) and Eyifah (2021) reveals that reliance on a narrow set of platforms limited the government’s ability to effectively disseminate messages. Moreover, interpersonal communication through community leaders and religious figures played a key role in interpreting official statements for less digitally connected populations (Anokwa et al., 2003; Yankah, 2020).

The public perception node captures how citizens interpreted and emotionally responded to the government's actions and messages. According to Entman (2004), media framing plays a decisive role in shaping how policy is understood. Some citizens viewed the banking reforms as necessary, while others saw them as politically motivated or unfair (Adarkwa & Boateng, 2022; Osei & Mensah, 2021). As McQuail (2010) and Kim & Grunig (2011) argue, perception is influenced not just by message content, but also by past experiences, media bias, and social discourse.

Flowing from perception is the issue of trust in government, which is both a predictor and an outcome of effective communication (OECD, 2017; Hetherington & Husser, 2012). Trust is built when institutions are seen as competent, transparent, and empathetic (Bouckaert & Van de Walle, 2003). Conversely, perceived opaqueness or emotional detachment erodes public confidence. In the 2019 reforms, many citizens criticized the government's tone as technocratic and detached, which led to speculation and resistance (Darko & Owusu-Mensah, 2022; Boamah & Osei-Asare, 2021).

Finally, the financial sector reform component contextualizes the crisis. As Beck and Levine (2004) and Mishkin (2006) note, such reforms must balance technical necessity with social impact. In Ghana, the sudden closure of over 400 institutions created significant emotional and economic distress, turning a financial clean-up into a public crisis (Bank of Ghana, 2019; Kwakye, 2013). The diagram shows how effective crisis communication could have mediated public reactions and improved the reform's reception.

The linkages between all these nodes demonstrate that no single factor operates in isolation. Media channel effectiveness influences public perception, which in turn affects trust in government. All three of these are influenced by, and feed back into, the crisis communication strategies used during the reform (Stephens & Malone, 2009; Ulmer et al., 2011). Applying both CCT and STP allows

the study to account for individual differences in awareness, constraints, and involvement (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Kim & Grunig, 2011), ensuring that the analytical framework captures both systemic and personal dimensions of the communication process.

Impact on the Ghanaian Banking System

The findings of this study hold significant implications for the banking system in Ghana, especially in understanding how communication strategies influence public perception during critical economic periods. By evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the strategies adopted during the 2019 banking sector reforms, this research sheds light on the role of communication in shaping institutional credibility and public trust. In Ghana, the banking sector is particularly sensitive to perception-driven responses such as panic withdrawals or loss of investor confidence. Studies show that during periods of financial upheaval, the effectiveness of government communication plays a pivotal role in maintaining order within the banking environment (Ulmer, Sellnow & Seeger, 2018).

Moreover, this study can inform how financial institutions and regulators, such as the Bank of Ghana (BoG) develop and deploy strategic messages in future reforms. Poorly managed public communication has been linked to the exacerbation of banking crises in countries such as Nigeria and Kenya, where unclear information led to widespread mistrust and financial instability (Coombs, 2014; Fearn-Banks, 2016). By contrast, when communication is proactive, empathetic, and consistent, it can rebuild stakeholder confidence and stabilise volatile financial environments. The BoG, therefore, stands to benefit from this study's recommendations on integrating robust communication into its regulatory oversight and crisis response frameworks.

In essence, the banking system can become more resilient and transparent if stakeholders prioritise effective communication. Transparent dissemination of information, regular updates to the public,

and engagement through traditional and digital media can reduce uncertainty and speculation during reforms (Dolphin, 2016). These strategies are vital for safeguarding financial integrity, reducing systemic risk, and creating an informed citizenry that can respond rationally to policy interventions. Hence, the study not only reflects past challenges but also serves as a blueprint for future financial governance in Ghana's evolving banking sector.

Preparing for Future Reforms

One of the most important things to learn from economic reforms around the world is how important it is to get ready for future changes, especially through communication. Many Ghanaians were surprised by the banking sector reforms in 2019 because they thought there was a communication vacuum between regulatory bodies and the public. This study looks closely at these gaps to give us a better idea of how to manage future reforms in a way that puts people first. Heath and O'Hair (2020) say that good risk communication makes people more ready and institutions more credible during times of transition, especially when trust has already been broken. The study's findings can help set up communication rules that work for people from all walks of life in Ghana's economy. This involves making early warning systems, employing local languages in mass education efforts, and making things more open by holding town halls or using internet platforms where everyone can participate. Reynolds and Seeger (2005) say that the success of reform efforts typically depends on how clear, timely, and culturally relevant the messages are. So, the BoG and the Ministry of Finance need to use techniques that consider varied degrees of financial literacy and media access.

By consistently learning from past communication mistakes, organisations can be more prepared for changes in the future. Using feedback loops, which look at how people react and use that information to improve communication plans, can make people feel included and make them less

likely to oppose changes (Brønn & Brønn, 2018). This makes sure that future projects are not only iconically solid but also socially accepted, which makes them more likely to succeed. This kind of readiness might make people feel like they are all responsible for something and make Ghana's financial system more resilient.

Implications for Stakeholders

This study gives specific benefits to important institutional stakeholders who work on economic policy and communication. For example, the Bank of Ghana might improve its communication departments by hiring behavioural communication experts who know how different groups interpret communications during crises. The Ministry of Finance can use the research to plan its messages in ways that make economic reforms easier to understand and stop people from getting them wrong. The Ministry of Information can also use the study's findings to make communication throughout the government more efficient amid financial crises (Allen & Wood, 2006). Also, business owners, financial analysts, depositors, and advocacy groups can all benefit from having better access to precise and trustworthy information regarding regulations in their field. When people communicate well, they are less likely to transmit false information, especially during times of institutional change. Men (2014) says that stakeholders are more inclined to trust the process and support institutional decisions when they feel that they have enough information. This study suggests ways that government agencies and citizens might work together and be more open with one other.

For regular people, the outcomes of this study encourage them to vote and make smart choices. Policymakers can better predict how people will behave and organize their communication to ease anxiety and confusion if they know how communication affected public behaviour throughout the 2019 revisions. This gives people the power to make smart choices when the economy changes in

the future, which will stabilize not only the financial system but also the political and social environment. Better communication amongst stakeholders leads to a governance system that is more resilient and open to participation.

Academic Significance

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environment. Better communication amongst stakeholders leads to a governance system that is more resilient and open to participation.

2.6 Chapter Summary and Lessons Learnt

This chapter critically examined the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings that shape the study, drawing on Crisis Communication Theory and the Situational Theory of Publics to anchor the analysis. These frameworks provide a lens through which government communication during crises, particularly Ghana's financial sector reform, can be understood and evaluated. Core concepts such as public perception, media channels, institutional trust, and the emotive and strategic dimensions of communication were thoroughly explored. The review of empirical literature demonstrated that in times of uncertainty, the structure, tone, and timeliness of communication significantly affect how citizens interpret policy actions and determine their response.

The conceptual framework emerging from this chapter illustrates the interconnectedness of message clarity, medium appropriateness, audience context, and trust-building. It posits that successful crisis communication requires more than the dissemination of information; it demands intentional engagement that considers public sentiment, social dynamics, and channel diversity. Communication must be emotionally intelligent, inclusive, and responsive to evolving public concerns.

Key lessons learnt from this chapter include the understanding that communication during crises must be proactive, not reactive, and that credibility is earned not only through transparency but also through empathy and cultural relevance. Furthermore, citizens are not passive recipients of messages; they actively interpret and evaluate communications through the lenses of prior experience, social influence, and media framing. Therefore, the failure to manage perception and

trust through strategic communication can significantly undermine policy acceptance and public cooperation.

Ultimately, the chapter affirms that effective crisis communication is foundational to democratic governance and public policy implementation. For governments navigating complex reforms, the communication strategy employed can either deepen distrust or foster a sense of shared responsibility. As such, this study is situated within a critical space that connects communication practices with social cohesion, institutional legitimacy, and long-term public confidence.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Three presents the research methodology employed in this study. It provides a detailed description of the research approach, research design, population, sampling strategies, data collection instruments, and the procedures for data handling, analysis, and ethical compliance. The mixed-methods approach integrated both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, offering a comprehensive understanding of the communication strategies used during the 2019 financial sector reforms in Ghana. The chapter justified the methodological choices made and how they align with the research objectives and questions.

3.2 Research Approach

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, which integrates both qualitative and quantitative techniques to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The approach enabled triangulation, where data from different sources were cross-verified to improve the reliability and validity of the findings (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007). It allowed the researcher to examine the richness of individual experiences through interviews, and to quantify general patterns through surveys (Denzin, 2012; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). As such, it accommodated both exploratory and explanatory goals, offering flexibility in addressing diverse research questions (Bryman, 2006).

In the context of this study, the mixed-methods approach helped capture both the emotional and perceptual reactions to communication during the banking sector reforms and the broader trends in public satisfaction (Plano-Clark & Ivankova, 2016). Qualitative data collected from interviews offered in-depth and insights into how individuals interpreted government communication. On the

other hand, quantitative data from questionnaires allowed the measurement of the prevalence of certain perceptions, behaviours, and levels of satisfaction among a larger sample (Creswell, 2013).

Furthermore, the integration of both methods enhanced methodological rigour and strengthened the evidence base for the study's conclusions (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2006). It also accommodated the social complexity of communication phenomena, which were best understood through multiple lenses (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The use of mixed methods was thus particularly useful in communication and policy studies, where subjective and objective data both play important roles (Morse & Niehaus, 2009).

Ultimately, this approach supported the goals of the study by balancing statistical generalisation with narrative depth, yielding findings that are both credible and contextually grounded (Greene, 2007; Morgan, 2007). This methodological alignment ensured that the study provided a robust and multidimensional assessment of government communication strategies during the financial sector reforms.

3.3 Research Design

The study employed a concurrent triangulation research design, a mixed-method approach that involved the simultaneous collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, to compare and integrate the results during the interpretation phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This design was particularly useful in addressing complex social phenomena, as it allowed the researcher to draw on the strengths of both methods while minimising their individual limitations. By running both strands in parallel, the study ensured that the findings were mutually reinforced and enhanced the credibility, validity, and depth of the results (Bryman, 2012; Fetters et al., 2013).

In this study, the quantitative strand involved administering structured surveys to respondents across selected urban communities in Accra, including Teshie, Labadi, Dansoman, and Weija. These surveys were intended to generate measurable insights into how different demographic groups perceived and responded to the government's financial sector reform communication. At the same time, the qualitative strand consisted of interviews conducted within the same communities and allowed participants to provide detailed accounts of their experiences, interpretations, and reactions to the reforms. This dual data collection process provided both the breadth and depth, capturing generalizable trends while also uncovering nuanced and context-specific perspectives (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

The integration of these two strands occurred during the analysis and interpretation phase, where survey findings were compared with interview results to identify areas of convergence, divergence, and complementarity. The approach strengthened the conclusions and ensured that statistical patterns are substantiated by lived experiences, and vice versa. As Greene et al. (1989) argued, concurrent triangulation not only enhances the robustness of findings but also yields practical insights that can inform both scholarship and policymaking. In the context of this study, the research design provided a comprehensive understanding of how the financial sector reforms were communicated, received, and interpreted, making it particularly suitable for evaluating government communication effectiveness during the period of the crisis.

3.4 Study Setting

The study was carried out in Accra, the capital city of Ghana, which serves as the political, economic, and administrative hub of the country (GSS, 2021). Within Accra, four specific communities, Teshie, Labadi, Dansoman, and Weija, were selected for data collection due to their demographic diversity, economic vibrancy, and varying degrees of exposure to the financial

reforms. These areas were characterised by a mix of residential, commercial, and informal sector activities, making them ideal for understanding varied public responses to crisis communication (Ampofo, 2016).

Accra's urban setting provided a fertile ground for the study of media access and public engagement. The city is home to major traditional and digital media outlets, and residents have diverse media consumption habits, ranging from radio and television to social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook (Kperogi, 2020). This variety was essential for evaluating how effective the government tailored its communication strategies to suit different media preferences.

Moreover, Accra experienced a significant number of institutional closures during the 2019 financial sector reforms, and affected both residents and businesses (Bank of Ghana, 2020). This makes the city a focal point for understanding public reactions, financial anxieties, and the role of communication in mitigating panic or misinformation (Adarkwa & Boateng, 2022). It's urban complexity also enabled the study to explore both from the grassroots and elite perspectives, thereby enriching the data of the findings.

Finally, the study conducted in Accra allowed the researcher to engage with stakeholders across multiple sectors, financial institutions, government offices, civil society, and the media. This access facilitated a broader analysis of how institutional messages were framed, received, and how communication strategies can be improved in future reforms (Boamah & Osei-Asare, 2021; Domfeh, & Osei-Asibey, 2021).

3.5 Study Population

Residents in Accra aged 18 years and above who were either directly or indirectly affected by the 2019 banking sector clean-up were the target population for the study. This includes individuals

such as depositors who lost access to their funds, employees of defunct financial institutions, and members of the public who followed developments through various media channels. Engaging these demographics allowed more context-rich understanding of the emotional, social, and economic implications of the crisis. As Silverman (2013) and Denzin and Lincoln (2011) argued, selecting participants with lived experiences enhances the credibility and depth of qualitative inquiry. This focus aligned with Creswell and Poth's (2018) assertion that qualitative research should seek to understand phenomena from the perspective of those who experience it. Furthermore, Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasized the importance of participant relevance when conducting thematic analysis in complex, real-life settings. The selected population included diverse individuals from various socio-economic backgrounds, which enhanced the internal validity of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

For the quantitative component, the population scope was expanded to include small business owners, professionals, informal sector workers, and other economically active individuals residing within Accra's urban communities. This inclusion ensured that broader trends in public perception, media use, and satisfaction with government communication strategies were captured. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), a well-defined and diverse population strengthens the external validity of mixed-methods research. Similarly, Babbie (2020) suggested that surveying individuals across multiple strata helps in identifying consistent patterns and variations in public opinion. By integrating both affected individuals and general citizens, the study aimed to produce findings that are not only statistically relevant but also practically informative for policy formulation and crisis communication planning. As Greene (2007) and Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) noted, mixed-methods studies are strengthened when populations are selected to maximise both experiential insight and generalizability.

3.6 Sample and Sampling Techniques

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed to ensure the study's robustness and inclusivity. For the qualitative strand, purposive sampling was used to deliberately select participants with firsthand experience of the financial sector reforms, such as affected depositors, government communicators, and media practitioners (Patton, 2015). Snowball sampling complemented this process, where initial participants referred others with relevant experiences, thereby expanding the sample pool (Tracy, 2020).

In total, 10 participants were selected for the qualitative component, allowing for deep, context-rich interviews that illuminated the human and emotional dimensions of the crisis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Seidman, 2006). These participants came from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, offering multiple perspectives on how communication was received and interpreted during the crisis (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013).

For the quantitative component, a stratified random sampling technique was employed to select 100 respondents from the four study areas (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Stratification was based on key demographics such as age, gender, and occupation to ensure broad representativeness and facilitated comparative analysis (Babbie, 2020; Bryman, 2016). This approach enhanced the external validity of the findings and ensured that diverse segments of the Accra population were captured.

By combining purposive, snowball, and stratified random sampling, the study achieved both depth and breadth. This multi-pronged strategy strengthens the study's generalizability and credibility, making the findings more applicable to communication practice and policymaking in crisis contexts (Teddlie & Yu, 2007; Fowler, 2013).

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

The study used two primary data collection instruments: a semi-structured interview guide for the qualitative component and a structured questionnaire for the quantitative aspect. These instruments were chosen to align with the mixed-methods approach and to effectively capture both the subjective experiences and measurable opinions of participants (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). The dual-instrument strategy ensured that both open-ended narratives and structured responses were collected, enabling triangulation and strengthening the validity of findings (Johnson et al., 2007; Morse & Niehaus, 2009).

The interview guide was designed with open-ended questions, which encouraged participants to share personal insights, reflections, and emotions about the government's crisis communication during the financial sector reforms. Key themes included were trust in government, media usage, perceptions of clarity and tone, and the emotional impact of the reforms (Seidman, 2006; Tracy, 2020). This allowed flexibility in probing deeper into emerging issues while ensuring consistency across all interviews. To improve the instrument's content validity, the guide was reviewed by two experts in crisis communication and piloted with three participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The structured questionnaire, on the other hand, was designed to gather quantifiable data from a broader participant poll. It featured Likert-scale items, multiple-choice questions, and dichotomous options to assess satisfaction with government communication, preferred media channels, and demographic variables. Items were constructed based on the theoretical constructs identified in the literature review and analytical framework, including crisis communication strategies and media trust (Dillman et al., 2014; DeVellis, 2016). The instruments were pretested with 10 respondents outside the sample frame to assess clarity, reliability, and internal consistency.

Both instruments were tailored to suit the literacy levels and communication norms of the study population in Accra. In addition to the English language, interview sessions were allowed in local languages, when necessary, with the aid of translators when appropriate. The localisation ensured that the data collection processes were inclusive and culturally sensitive (Anokwa et al., 2003; Adarkwa & Boateng, 2022). By combining these tools, the study achieved a balance between depth and generalisability, enabling a comprehensive analysis of public perception and institutional communication strategies during the 2019 financial crisis.

3.8 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity were essential in ensuring the rigour and trustworthiness of the research, particularly in mixed-methods studies. Reliability in research refers to the consistency and stability of the instruments used and the data obtained over time (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Grbich, 2013). For the qualitative component, reliability was enhanced by using a standardised interview protocol across all sessions, maintaining consistency in ways questions were asked, and how data was recorded (Seidman, 2006). Interview sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to prevent misinterpretation or distortion of participant responses (Tracy, 2020; Ritchie et al., 2014). For the quantitative strand, instrument reliability was tested through a pilot study involving 10 respondents from outside the main sample frame. Using Cronbach's Alpha, internal consistency was calculated for the Likert-scale items to ensure that each set of related questions measured the same underlying construct (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). A threshold of 0.7 and above was considered acceptable for reliability (DeVellis, 2016). This statistical measure helped identify weak items that required revision and ensured that the final questionnaire is both precise and dependable in measuring public perceptions and attitudes.

Validity, on the other hand, refers to the degree to which an instrument accurately captures what it's intended to measure (Babbie, 2020; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, qualitative validity was strengthened through member checking, where participants were allowed to review their transcripts, confirm, and clarify their statements (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This helped reduce researcher bias and ensured that the data truly reflected participants' experiences. Additionally, triangulation was achieved by comparing insights from the interviews, field notes, and survey results, thereby enhancing the robustness of the findings (Morse & Niehaus, 2009).

To further enhance content and construct validity, both instruments underwent expert review by scholars in communication, research methodology, and policy analysts. Their feedback informed the refinement of questions and ensured clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study's objectives (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010; Bryman, 2016). Cultural appropriateness was also ensured by adapting language to suit the Ghanaian context, including translations into Twi and Ga where necessary. Together, these measures enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings and supported the study's capacity to offer reliable and valid insights into communication strategies during Ghana's financial reforms.

3.9 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process for this study was carried out over a period of six-weeks and involved a coordinated administration of both qualitative and quantitative instruments. This concurrent data collection allowed the researcher to triangulate findings from interviews and questionnaires, offering a multidimensional view of public responses to government communication during the financial sector reforms (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Greene, 2007). Prior to data collection, ethical clearance was secured from the appropriate institutional review board, and all participants

were provided with information sheets detailing the purpose, risks, and benefits of the study (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2001).

For the qualitative part, in-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured guide. Interviews took place in person and via digital platforms such as Zoom and WhatsApp, depending on participants' availability and preferences (Seidman, 2006; Tracy, 2020). Each interview lasted between 25 and 30 minutes and were conducted in English, Twi, and Ga, based on the participants' comfort. To ensure authenticity and maintain context, the interviews were recorded with participants' consent and supplemented with field notes capturing non-verbal cues and contextual insights (Silverman, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

For the quantitative aspect, questionnaires were distributed in the same communities where interviews were conducted, Teshie, Labadi, Dansoman, and Weija. Some respondents self-administered the questionnaires, while others were assisted by trained field officers, particularly in cases that involved low literacy levels (Dillman, Smyth & Christian, 2014). Participants were given sufficient time to complete the instruments and were asked clarified questions where necessary. Completed questionnaires were reviewed immediately for completeness and consistency before being accepted, ensuring minimal data loss and high-quality responses (Fink, 2017; Babbie, 2020).

Throughout the data collection process, measures were taken to maintain neutrality, avoid interviewer bias, and create a conducive environment for participation (Patton, 2015). Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, which helped them speak openly about their views and experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Regular team briefings and debriefings helped identify emerging themes and adjust field tactics where necessary (Grbich, 2013; Miles, Huberman &

Saldaña, 2014). The combined use of multiple data collection methods and careful field procedures ensured that the study generated rich, credible, and relevant data for analysis.

3.10 Data Handling, Processing, and Analysis

The data analysis phases were structured to align with the study's mixed-methods design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative strategies to produce comprehensive and credible results (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). The qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews were processed first. Each recorded interview was transcribed verbatim to preserve the authenticity and richness of participants' responses (Seidman, 2006). Transcripts were imported into NVivo software to facilitate data organisation, coding, and thematic extraction (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). NVivo helped in streamlining the analytical process by allowing codes to be stored, retrieved, and compared systematically across transcripts.

Thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), was employed to analyse the qualitative data. The approach involved six phases: familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and producing the final report. The coding process were both inductive and deductive, allowing themes to emerge organically from participant narratives while also being guided by the research objectives (Boyatzis, 1998). Codes were refined through iterative comparison, and themes were validated by returning to the data repeatedly to ensure internal coherence and representativeness (Nowell et al., 2017). This allowed the researcher to identify patterns relating to trust, satisfaction, media channels, and tone of communication.

For the quantitative strand, the collected questionnaires were entered and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 27. Prior to analysis, data was screened for

completeness, errors, and outliers to maintain integrity (Field, 2013; Pallant, 2020). Descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, and percentages were computed to summarize trends in public satisfaction, media preferences, and perceptions of government transparency (Bryman, 2016). These statistics provided valuable insight into the broader patterns and allowed comparisons across demographic variables like age, gender, and education level (Fink, 2017).

The integration of qualitative and quantitative data occurred during the interpretation phase, as guided by the principles of the concurrent triangulation design (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010; Creswell, 2013). Findings from the thematic analysis were compared with patterns emerging from the statistical data to identify convergence, divergence, or complementarity. For instance, qualitative insights about mistrust and emotional distress were corroborated by quantitative trends indicating low levels of public satisfaction. This integration strengthened the overall validity and interpretative power of the study by situating personal narratives within broader statistical patterns (Greene, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006).

In addition, triangulation between interview data, field notes, and survey results enhanced the study's internal validity and mitigated the limitations of relying on a single method (Patton, 2015). The use of software tools like NVivo and SPSS added methodological rigour and ensured transparency in the data management process (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). By systematically organising, analysing, and integrating different data types, the research was able to draw nuanced conclusions that are grounded in both empirical measurement and lived experience (Morse & Niehaus, 2009). This holistic approach ensured that the study's findings informed both scholarly discourse and practical policy reforms.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical compliance was a central priority throughout this study, particularly given the sensitive nature of the financial reforms and their impact on individuals' economic and emotional well-being. The research protocol was reviewed and approved by the university's Institutional Review Board, ensuring adherence to ethical standards in social science research (Israel & Hay, 2006; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were recruited based on informed consent, which entailed full disclosure about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the right to withdraw at any point without penalty (Orb, et al., 2001). Consent forms were signed before any data collection began, and participants were assured that their identities would be anonymised to protect their privacy.

Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly observed throughout the research process. All interview recordings, transcripts, and questionnaire responses were stored securely, password-protected for digital files and locked cabinets for physical documents (Wiles et al., 2008). Pseudonyms were used in all written reports, and identifiable information were removed during transcription and data entry. Only the primary researcher had access to the raw data, and this access was governed by strict data protection protocols consistent with international standards such as the GDPR (Bryman, 2016; Tracy, 2020). These precautions ensured that participants' personal and financial experiences were considered highly sensitive and remained confidential.

In conducting interviews and administering questionnaires, particular attention was paid to emotional distress that arose from recalling traumatic experiences related to financial loss. Participants who exhibit signs of distress were offered the opportunity to pause or terminate the interview without consequence (Seidman, 2006; Liamputtong, 2007). The researcher maintained a neutral, empathetic demeanour to create a supportive environment where participants feel

comfortable sharing their experiences. This ethical sensitivity is essential for maintaining participant trust and ensuring the credibility and integrity of the data collected (Ritchie et al., 2014). Furthermore, the research adhered to the principle of beneficence by ensuring that the study's findings were used to inform policy and practice aimed at improving government communication strategies in future reforms (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Silverman, 2013). Debriefing sessions were offered to participants after data collection, where the researcher clarified how their input contributed to broader societal learning. This final ethical gesture reinforced the study's commitment to transparency, mutual respect, and social responsibility (Patton, 2015; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). By integrating ethical practices into all stages of the research process, the study upheld both the dignity of its participants and the standards of academic rigour.

3.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the methodology to be employed in examining the communication strategies used during the 2019 financial sector reforms in Ghana. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews and quantitative questionnaires to capture both the depth and breadth of public responses. A concurrent triangulation design was used to collect and analyse both data types simultaneously, allowing for a comprehensive and integrated understanding of the subject matter.

The research was conducted in four selected communities in Accra, Teshie, Labadi, Dansoman, and Weija, chosen for their socio-economic diversity and relevance to the study. A multi-stage sampling strategy was employed to select a total of 110 participants: 10 for interviews and 100 for survey responses. Data collection instruments include a semi-structured interview guide and a structured questionnaire, both of which were developed and pretested to ensure clarity and relevance.

Rigorous attention was given to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. Member checking, triangulation, and expert reviews were applied to enhance the credibility of the qualitative data, while statistical techniques such as Cronbach's alpha were used to verify the reliability of quantitative measures. Data was collected ethically, with informed consent and confidentiality at the forefront, and analysed using NVivo for thematic analysis and SPSS for descriptive statistics.

The chapter established the methodological groundwork for the study, setting the stage for the presentation, analysis, and discussion of findings in Chapter Four. By integrating methodological rigor with ethical sensitivity, the research aimed to generate insights that are both academically robust and socially impactful.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data and the discussion of results. The Response rate, Descriptive statistics, Test of validity and reliability, and Discussion of results.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

This section describes the views on the 2019 banking sector crisis, the specific communication channels and strategies employed by the government, the level of satisfaction among affected residents and the communication-related challenges faced by government institutions using frequencies.

4.2.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The profile of the eighty respondents' respondents in terms of Gender, Age, Work duration and Highest qualification is analysed in this section.

Table 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

CONSTRUCTS		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
GENDER	Male	45	46
	Female	53	54
AGE	18 - 25	10	10
	26 – 35	51	52
	36 – 45	34	35
	46 - 55	3	3
LEVEL OF EDUCATION	Postgraduate	29	30
	SHS/Secondary	14	14
	Tertiary (Diploma/Bachelor)	55	56
OCCUPATION OF PARTICIPANTS	Public sector worker	38	39
	Self-employed	35	36

	Student	12	12
	Unemployed	10	10
AREA OF RESIDENTS IN ACCRA	Central Accra	21	21
	East Accra	26	27
	North Accra	33	34
	West Accra	18	18

The demographic profile of respondents demonstrates a fairly equitable gender distribution, with females constituting 54% and males 46% of the sample. The age structure reveals that a majority of participants (52%) are within the 26–35 years category, followed by the 36–45 years cohort (35%). Respondents aged 18–25 account for 10%, while those between 46–55 years represent only 3%, indicating that the study population predominantly comprises individuals in their economically active years.

Educational attainment among respondents is notably high. Over half (56%) possess tertiary-level qualifications (Diploma/bachelor’s degree), and an additional 30% have completed postgraduate studies. Only 14% reported Senior High School (SHS) or equivalent education, suggesting that the sample is largely composed of individuals with advanced formal education.

Occupationally, public sector workers represent the largest proportion of the participants (39%), closely followed by self-employed individuals (36%). Students constitute 12% of the respondents, while 10% are unemployed. This reflects a diverse population with significant representation from both the formal and informal employment sectors.

With respect to residential distribution, respondents are spread across different areas of Accra, with the highest representation from North Accra (34%) and East Accra (27%). Central and West Accra account for 21% and 18% of the respondents, respectively. This spatial distribution suggests adequate coverage of major residential zones within the capital city.

4.2.2 The General Views of Residents on the Banking Sector Crisis

Fifteen items were developed in the questionnaire to ascertain the general views of residents on the banking sector crisis. The quantitative findings are presented below:

Table 4.2 Descriptive Statistics - General Views of Residents on the Banking Sector Crisis

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I was concerned about my finances during the 2019 banking sector crisis."	1	5	3.94	1.291
The banking sector crisis affected my ability to access financial services.	1	5	3.47	1.278
The crisis reduced my trust in banks and other financial institutions.	1	5	3.84	1.266
I received timely information about the banking sector crisis	1	5	2.59	1.361
The crisis had a noticeable impact on my daily financial activities.	1	5	3.28	1.413
The crisis created uncertainty about the safety of my savings	1	5	3.71	1.300
I fully understood the reasons behind the banking sector clean-up when it was announced.	1	5	2.77	1.491

The banking sector crisis negatively affected the financial well-being of my household.	1	5	3.36	1.401
I was able to easily verify the information I received about the crisis.	1	5	2.93	1.301
The crisis affected my confidence in depositing money in financial institutions.	1	5	3.71	1.385
I felt anxious or stressed about the future of my financial situation during the crisis	1	5	3.70	1.355
The crisis affected how I planned or managed my finances during that period	1	5	3.73	1.350
I sought additional information from non-government sources (e.g., social media, friends, banks) during the crisis.	1	5	3.47	1.325
My community was significantly affected by the banking sector crisis.	1	5	3.44	1.244
The banking sector crisis changed my long-term perception of the financial sector.	1	5	3.63	1.402

The descriptive statistics indicate that respondents generally expressed strong concern about the 2019 banking sector crisis and its implications for their financial security and trust in financial institutions. The highest mean score was recorded for concerns about personal finances during the crisis (Mean = 3.94, SD = 1.291), reflecting widespread anxiety among residents. Similarly, there was a substantial decline in public trust, as evidenced by high agreement with the statement that the crisis reduced trust in banks and financial institutions (Mean = 3.84, SD = 1.266). Respondents also reported heightened uncertainty about the safety of their savings (Mean = 3.71, SD = 1.300) and reduced confidence in depositing money with banks (Mean = 3.71, SD = 1.385).

The crisis appears to have influenced financial planning and well-being as well. Residents indicated that it affected their confidence in managing finances (Mean = 3.73, SD = 1.350) and contributed to stress and anxiety over their financial future (Mean = 3.70, SD = 1.355). The overall impact extended to households and communities, as respondents noted negative effects on household financial well-being (Mean = 3.36, SD = 1.401) and significant effects within their communities (Mean = 3.44, SD = 1.244).

Conversely, items relating to communication and public understanding of the crisis received relatively lower mean scores. Respondents expressed limited agreement that they received timely information (Mean = 2.59, SD = 1.361) or fully understood the reasons behind the financial sector clean-up (Mean = 2.77, SD = 1.491). Additionally, the ability to easily verify information scored below the midpoint (Mean = 2.93, SD = 1.301), suggesting challenges in accessing credible or transparent communication during the period.

While the crisis significantly influenced financial perceptions, confidence, and daily financial behaviour, the results show deficiencies in communication effectiveness, information accessibility, and public understanding of government actions. These findings underscore the importance of

transparent and timely government communication strategies in managing public confidence during financial sector reforms.

4.2.3 Government Communication Channels and Strategies

Like the first, 15 items were developed to ascertain the communication strategies employed by the government in managing the banking crisis within Accra and its findings are presented below;

Table 4.3 Descriptive Statistics – Government Communication Channels and Strategies

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The government communicated through multiple platforms to reach different groups of residents.	1	5	2.71	1.316
The communication strategies used by the government were well-coordinated across different agencies.	1	5	2.62	1.318
The government provided regular updates as the banking sector reforms progressed.	1	5	2.66	1.226
The messages from government institutions were consistent across television, radio, and social media.	1	5	2.89	1.259
The government provided enough explanations to clarify misinformation and rumours about the crisis.	1	5	2.69	1.310

The communication tone used by the government was reassuring and appropriate for a crisis.	1	5	2.66	1.268
The communication strategy used enabled me to understand the actions taken during the banking sector clean-up.	1	5	2.68	1.238
The government engaged the public effectively through interactive platforms (e.g., interviews, press briefings, Q&A sessions).	1	5	2.52	1.231
I felt the government targeted the right communication channels for affected residents.	1	5	2.45	1.315
Government communication reached me before misinformation spread from unofficial sources.	1	5	2.60	1.419
Government communication during the crisis was proactive rather than reactive.	1	5	2.82	1.338
The communication channels used by the government were accessible to all categories of residents, including vulnerable groups.	1	5	2.63	1.310

Government communication provided actionable steps for affected customers to follow during the banking reforms.	1	5	2.62	1.211
The frequency of government communication was adequate for keeping residents informed throughout the crisis.	1	5	2.53	1.085
Communication from government sources appeared credible and trustworthy during the banking sector clean-up.	1	5	2.77	1.174

The results reveal generally low levels of agreement among respondents regarding the effectiveness of the government’s communication strategies during the banking sector crisis. Across the indicators, mean scores hover below the midpoint of the scale, suggesting that residents perceived communication efforts to be insufficient or ineffective.

Respondents expressed limited agreement that the government used multiple platforms to reach diverse resident groups (Mean = 2.71, SD = 1.316) or that communication across different agencies was well coordinated (Mean = 2.62, SD = 1.318). Similarly, perceptions of regular government updates (Mean = 2.66, SD = 1.226) and message consistency across media outlets (Mean = 2.89, SD = 1.259) were relatively weak, indicating concerns over uniformity and timeliness of information dissemination.

The findings further show challenges with information clarity and crisis reassurance. Respondents disagreed that the government provided adequate explanations to counter misinformation (Mean = 2.69, SD = 1.310) or that the communication tone was reassuring during the crisis (Mean = 2.66, SD = 1.268). The perceived ability of communication strategies to improve public understanding of the clean-up process was also below average (Mean = 2.68, SD = 1.238).

Moreover, engagement with the public appeared limited. Items measuring interactive communication approaches such as press briefings and Q&A sessions scored among the lowest (Mean = 2.52, SD = 1.231). Respondents were also unconvinced that communication targeted the appropriate channels for affected residents (Mean = 2.45, SD = 1.315) or pre-empted misinformation from unofficial sources (Mean = 2.60, SD = 1.419).

With respect to inclusiveness and accessibility, respondents perceived that communication strategies did not sufficiently accommodate all resident categories, including vulnerable groups (Mean = 2.63, SD = 1.310). There was also low agreement that the information provided included actionable guidance for affected customers (Mean = 2.62, SD = 1.211) or that communication frequency was adequate (Mean = 2.53, SD = 1.085).

Finally, perceptions of credibility were modest, with respondents moderately disagreeing that government communication appeared trustworthy during the reforms (Mean = 2.77, SD = 1.174).

The findings demonstrate a strong perception that government communication during the banking sector crisis was reactive, insufficiently coordinated, inadequately proactive in managing misinformation, and ineffective in educating and reassuring the public. This highlights a significant communication gap that may have contributed to heightened public fear, mistrust, and uncertainty throughout the banking reforms.

4.2.4 Satisfaction with Government Communication

Again, 12 items were developed to assess the level of satisfaction among affected residents of Accra regarding the government’s communication strategies during the financial sector reforms and its findings are presented below;

Table 4.4 Descriptive Statistics - Satisfaction with Government Communication

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I was satisfied with the information provided by the government during the 2019 banking sector crisis.	1	5	2.66	1.207
Government communication met my expectations in helping me cope with the crisis.	1	5	2.68	1.277
Government communication reassured me during the crisis.	1	5	2.67	1.231
Government communication strategies should be improved for future crises	1	5	3.93	1.317
The government provided adequate explanations to help me understand the reasons behind the banking sector reforms.	1	5	2.80	1.262
I felt that my concerns and questions as a resident were sufficiently addressed in government communication.	1	5	2.64	1.246

The government demonstrated empathy and consideration for affected residents in its communication.	1	5	2.69	1.272
I trusted the accuracy of information shared by government sources throughout the crisis.	1	5	2.75	1.196
The government's communication frequency (timing and regularity) was satisfactory.	1	5	2.78	1.198
The information provided by the government reduced confusion and uncertainty about the crisis.	1	5	2.66	1.195
The communication materials (press releases, broadcasts, online posts) were professionally presented.	1	5	2.86	1.175
Overall, I was satisfied with the government's approach to crisis communication during the banking sector clean-up.	1	5	2.68	1.290

The findings indicate a generally low level of satisfaction among residents concerning the government's communication efforts during the banking sector crisis. Across almost all indicators, mean values remain below the midpoint of the scale, suggesting widespread dissatisfaction with how information was conveyed and managed throughout the crisis period.

Respondents expressed limited satisfaction with the information provided by the government (Mean = 2.66, SD = 1.207) and did not believe that communication efforts helped them cope effectively with the situation (Mean = 2.68, SD = 1.277). Similarly, residents did not feel reassured by government messages (Mean = 2.67, SD = 1.231), nor did they perceive that their concerns or questions were adequately addressed (Mean = 2.64, SD = 1.246).

Perceptions of empathy and audience-centred communication were also low, as indicated by respondents' disagreement that the government demonstrated consideration for affected citizens (Mean = 2.69, SD = 1.272). Trust in the accuracy of information shared was modest (Mean = 2.75, SD = 1.196), reflecting a credibility gap in crisis messaging. Satisfaction with the frequency and regularity of updates was similarly weak (Mean = 2.78, SD = 1.198), and respondents reported that communication did little to reduce uncertainty (Mean = 2.66, SD = 1.195).

Although communication materials were viewed somewhat more favorably in terms of presentation quality (Mean = 2.86, SD = 1.175), this did not translate into overall satisfaction, as confirmed by the general rating of the government's approach to crisis communication (Mean = 2.68, SD = 1.290).

Notably, the strongest level of agreement was observed for the statement that government communication strategies should be improved for future crises (Mean = 3.93, SD = 1.317). This underscores a strong public desire for more effective communication planning, responsiveness, and transparency from government institutions in future crisis contexts.

Taken together, these results point to a clear dissatisfaction with the government's communication strategy during the financial sector reforms. Residents perceived communication as insufficient,

unresponsive, lacking reassurance, and ineffective in mitigating fear and uncertainty, highlighting a critical weakness in public relations and crisis messaging during the banking cleanup exercise.

4.2.5 Communication-Related Challenges

Finally, 15 items were developed to explore the communication-related challenges faced by government institutions in disseminating crisis information to the public in Accra during the banking sector clean-up. The findings are presented below:

Table 4.5 Descriptive Statistics - Communication-Related Challenges

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Government communication was sometimes delayed during the crisis.	1	5	3.57	1.140
Some information from government sources was unclear or inconsistent.	1	5	3.51	1.219
I faced difficulty accessing accurate information throughout the crisis.	1	5	3.58	1.097
Government institutions need to improve their crisis communication strategies.	1	5	4.16	1.085
The communication provided by government institutions did not adequately address misinformation and rumours.	1	5	3.64	1.110

Information provided by different government institutions sometimes contradicted each other.	1	5	3.69	1.136
Updates about the crisis were not provided frequently enough to keep residents fully informed.	1	5	3.68	1.084
Government communication did not reach all affected residents equally.	1	5	3.86	1.130
I found it difficult to verify whether the information shared about the crisis was credible.	1	5	3.46	1.206
The government did not provide enough opportunities for public feedback or clarification.	1	5	3.80	1.181
Technical challenges (e.g., poor network connectivity, limited digital access) affected my ability to receive crisis information.	1	5	3.18	1.194
The government relied too heavily on certain communication channels, reducing accessibility for some groups.	1	5	3.59	1.125
Government communication did not provide timely responses to emerging public concerns during the crisis.	1	5	3.50	1.105

The communication style employed by government sources made it difficult to understand the severity of the crisis fully.	1	5	3.42	1.190
Government institutions did not coordinate effectively in delivering consistent information to the public.	1	5	3.48	1.256

The results highlight significant communication shortcomings encountered by residents during the financial sector reforms. Overall, the mean scores, most of which fall well above the midpoint, indicate strong agreement that various communication-related challenges were prevalent throughout the crisis.

Key concerns include information accessibility and timeliness. Respondents widely agreed that government communication was sometimes delayed (Mean = 3.57, SD = 1.140) and that they experienced difficulty accessing accurate information (Mean = 3.58, SD = 1.097). In addition, they felt that updates were not provided frequently enough to keep the public adequately informed (Mean = 3.68, SD = 1.084), and that timely responses to public concerns were lacking (Mean = 3.50, SD = 1.105).

Clarity and consistency of messaging also emerged as major issues. Participants reported encountering unclear or inconsistent information from government sources (Mean = 3.51, SD = 1.219) and contradictory messages across institutions (Mean = 3.69, SD = 1.136). They further indicated difficulty in verifying the credibility of information received (Mean = 3.46, SD = 1.206), pointing to a weak system of trust and transparency.

The findings additionally reveal deficiencies in audience reach and inclusivity. Respondents agreed that government communication did not reach all affected residents equally (Mean = 3.86, SD = 1.130), partly due to an overreliance on specific communication channels that limited accessibility among some groups (Mean = 3.59, SD = 1.125). Technical barriers such as poor digital connectivity also restricted information flow for certain residents (Mean = 3.18, SD = 1.194).

A further challenge was insufficient public engagement. The government was perceived as not providing enough opportunities for feedback or clarification (Mean = 3.80, SD = 1.181), indicating a largely one-directional communication approach. Respondents also suggested that the communication tone and style did not effectively convey the seriousness of the crisis (Mean = 3.42, SD = 1.190), potentially hindering effective public response.

Finally, the strongest agreement was observed on the need for improved crisis communication strategies within government institutions (Mean = 4.16, SD = 1.085). This underscores a clear expectation for more structured, coordinated, and proactive communication in future national emergencies.

Collectively, these findings show that residents experienced substantial challenges in accessing timely, clear, inclusive, and coordinated information during the crisis. These deficiencies likely contributed to heightened misinformation, public confusion, and erosion of trust in government communication efforts.

4.3 Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings of the study are based on interviews with seven residents in Accra who were affected by the 2019 banking sector crisis, designed to complement the quantitative results

by offering deeper insights into their lived experiences and perceptions. The interviews examined trust in the financial system, satisfaction with government communication, and the challenges encountered during the crisis. Using Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis framework, four major themes emerged: public experiences and perceptions of the crisis; government communication channels and messaging strategies; satisfaction with crisis communication efforts; and communication-related challenges that hindered public understanding. These themes provide contextual richness to the quantitative data and contribute to a more holistic understanding of how crisis communication shaped public attitudes during Ghana's financial sector reforms.

4.3.1 What are the general views of residents in selected areas of Accra on the 2019 banking sector crisis?

Residents in selected areas of Accra recall the 2019 banking sector crisis as a period of profound personal and communal devastation, marked by a deep and lasting erosion of trust.

The overall experience was one of severe hardship. For small business owners like P1, the impact was direct:

"It was terrible. I lost my capital and couldn't restock my shop for months. Sales dropped drastically, and customers stopped coming because my shelves were empty."

The crisis shattered lives, as P3 described:

"Devastating. My life savings were tied up in a microfinance company. I had no money for medication and had to depend on my children for everything."

The fear was pervasive, even for those not directly affected, like driver P7:

"It confused me. I didn't have huge savings, but seeing passengers crying over their lost money made me scared about where to keep my little income."

Initial reactions to the shutdowns ranged from seeing it as a necessary evil to feeling pure regulatory incompetence. For many, the dominant emotion was betrayal.

"I felt betrayed. All the promises they gave us were lies,"

said P3. This fundamentally corroded trust in the financial system, leading to drastic behavioural changes.

P1 stated,

"Completely eroded. Now, I keep all my business earnings as cash. I prefer 'under-the-mattress' savings."

Others, like P6, adopted a strategy of caution:

"My trust is shaky. I still save, but I spread my money across different banks and avoid long-term investments."

The crisis ripped through the social fabric of communities. P1 observed,

"Many small businesses collapsed. People borrowed from loan sharks at high interest just to survive."

The human cost was stark, with P2 noting,

"There was a clear rise in poverty. Some elderly people who depended on savings became beggars overnight."

Family structures were strained, as P5 highlighted:

"Financial stress increased family tensions, even divorces. Money issues divided many homes."

The long-term effects continue to reshape financial behaviour and social outlook. Informal systems have gained ground, with P1 noting,

"People now avoid banks. They save at home or use informal Susu collectors."

Community-based trust has replaced institutional faith, as P6 observed:

"More community savings groups are forming. People trust their neighbours more than banks now."

Perhaps the most profound impact is generational. P2 lamented,

"A generation that should be planning for retirement is now starting from zero."

The crisis left a legacy of deep-seated caution and a stolen sense of financial security.

Table 4.6 Recurring Themes – General Views of Residents

Theme	Frequency	Description
Financial Loss & Business Disruption	4	Participants reported capital loss, disrupted cash flow, and closure of small businesses.
Emotional Distress	3	Stress, anxiety, and health impacts due to uncertainty and financial insecurity.
Distrust in the Financial System	4	Erosion of trust in banks and microfinance institutions; participants are reluctant to save formally.
Informal Financial Practices	3	Shift toward saving at home or in collective schemes like ‘Susu’.
Community & Social Impacts	3	Increased poverty, student withdrawals, and brain drain of finance professionals.

The findings indicate that the crisis affected participants financially, emotionally, and socially. Direct losses and reduced liquidity disrupted livelihoods, particularly for traders and entrepreneurs. Emotional distress was prevalent among pensioners and vulnerable groups. The shift to informal savings and collective investment schemes demonstrates long-term mistrust in formal institutions. Social implications, such as increased poverty and talent migration, underline the wider societal consequences of financial crises.

4.3.2 What specific communication channels and strategies did the government use to manage the banking crisis in Accra?

During Accra's banking sector turmoil, the government deployed a broad array of communication channels to manage public perception and disseminate critical information. Yet, the story told by residents is not one of coherent outreach, but of a fractured and often dissonant effort that struggled to connect with the very people it aimed to serve.

The channels themselves were a mix of the traditional and the modern, creating a patchwork of information access. For many, like P1 and P7, the primary source was radio, with its pervasive reach.

"You hear them as soon as you start the engine,"

Noted P7. P2 pointed out that

"TV ads broadcasts, press releases, and official websites are my sources",

While a more digitally connected segment, like P4, stated.

"I follow updates on Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp groups".

However, the how of the communication often undermined the what. The strategy vacillated between formality and reactivity.

While P2 acknowledged

"A well-planned press conferences and detailed policy statements,"

P3 also said that

"A widespread feeling that communication was chiefly reactive. They only spoke when there was another closure."

Updates often arrived as public service announcements, sometimes translated after the fact, but the core issue remained: the message was consistently misfiring.

When asked if these messages were clear and timely, the verdict was overwhelming.

"No, the jargon, liquidity, insolvency, capitalisation alienated ordinary people."

P7 said. He added

"They are confusing, they came after things had already gone bad."

Even P2, who found the official statements clear, conceded they were late. He spoke

"People panicked first before being clarified. The government had critically underestimated how to reach low-literacy audiences."

Several specific strategies were highlighted as particularly confusing or ineffective. P1 said,

"It was the shifting deadlines for resolutions, where every new date brought another disappointment."

P3 shared that,

"The fundamental failure was a lack of empathy. We needed comfort, not just data and press briefings,"

P6 added,

"The communication was further poisoned by political arguments on public platforms and contradictory statements from different officials, especially on social media, which eroded any semblance of a unified, trustworthy voice."

From this experience, residents offered clear-eyed improvements. P1 emphasised that

“We dreamed of simple demonstrations or infographics in local languages on airwaves, not just English text. We plead for a dedicated helpline or community offices where victims could speak to trained officers and feel heard.”

P7 suggested

“The memorable power of short jingles in all Ghanaian dialects, repeated often will be a game changer.”

Above all, there was a call to depoliticize the crisis:

“Avoid the political fights and let the technical people lead communication. That builds trust,” urged P6.

The narrative of the government’s communication strategy during the crisis is, therefore, a tale of missed connections. It was a strategy that spoke in many places, on the radio, in the newspaper, on Twitter, and in the community square, but too often failed to speak in a way that resonated, reassured, or truly reached the hearts and minds of a worried city.

4.7 Recurring Themes – Communication Channels

Theme	Frequency	Description
Channel Accessibility	4	Radio, TV, newspapers, and social media were used; some were inaccessible to rural or low-income residents.
Speed vs Clarity	3	Social media was fast but less credible; traditional media was slower but clearer.

Technical Language	4	Messages often contained jargon, making comprehension difficult.
Reactive Communication	3	Updates often followed events, rather than anticipating them.
Suggested Improvements	5	Use of infographics, local languages, helplines, and jingles is recommended.

4.3.3 What is the level of satisfaction among affected residents in Accra concerning the government’s communication strategies during the financial sector reforms?

The financial sector reforms in Accra were not merely an economic event; they were a profound test of trust between the government and its people. The level of satisfaction among affected residents regarding the government’s communication revealed not just a gap in information, but a chasm of understanding and empathy.

For many, the experience was defined by a deep sense of dissatisfaction and exclusion. The ratings residents gave, a "1/5" or even a "0/5", were less about numbers and more about a visceral feeling of being left in the dark.

"It felt like they were hiding the full extent of the problem. I didn't know who to trust,"

shared P1, echoing a sentiment of betrayal that turned to fear. This fear had lasting consequences, as P1 admitted the communication made him

"More cynical and fearful, leading me to avoid banks now whenever possible."

For others, like P3 who rated their experience a zero over five, the failure was one of connection. The information

"Seemed tailored for the elite leaving ordinary people confused and anxious."

Their expectation was simple, yet unmet, P8 said:

"I just wanted a simple apology and a clear timeline. They gave neither and this absence of a human touch made them feel completely ignored."

Even those who found some value in the communications, like P2 who was

"Moderately Satisfied"

noted a critical shortfall. While legal frameworks were provided, practical advice was missing. The information met technical expectations but failed to guide daily decisions. Similarly, P5, who was

"Satisfied"

from a regulatory standpoint, P5 highlighted the disconnect:

"The information didn't help me plan my business recovery and offered nothing to restore confidence in the market."

The communication addressed systemic issues but forgot the individuals within the system.

A recurring theme was the inaccessible, technical language that acted as a barrier. P7,

"Very Dissatisfied, the updates were too technical and in English only."

This wasn't just an inconvenience; it was a wall. When asked if the communication helped them cope, P1's answer was blunt:

"Failed. I expected clear steps... Instead, I received legal jargon."

The digital updates, while present, offered cold comfort. P4, who followed social media, stated

"I was dissatisfied, the tone was cold and detached. These updates kept me informed, but they didn't build trust or reduce anxiety."

In the end, the question of whether the communication provided reassurance received telling answers. For some, like P2, it slightly confirmed action was being taken. For P5, it offered only a clinical, long-term regulatory reassurance. But for many more, it did the opposite. It bred cynicism, confirmed their sense of invisibility, and ultimately failed to bridge the gap between high-level policy and human crisis. The story told by these voices is clear: satisfaction was crippled not by a lack of information, but by a profound lack of accessible, empathetic, and actionable communication.

Table 4.8 Recurring Themes - Satisfaction with Government Communication

Theme	Frequency	Description
Low Satisfaction	4	Participants rated communication as poor, insufficient, or elitist.
Expectation vs Reality	4	Communication failed to provide actionable guidance for coping with the crisis.
Limited Reassurance	3	Updates did not reduce fear or build confidence in the financial system.

Need for Personalisation	4	Participants wanted letters, SMS, or community-based updates tailored to individuals.
Transparency & Accountability	3	Desire for visible actions and prosecution of those responsible.

The dissatisfaction highlights a mismatch between regulatory communication and public needs. Technical information without empathy failed to build trust, especially among vulnerable populations. Recommendations such as personalised updates, multilingual outreach, and accountability measures would improve satisfaction and public confidence during financial crises.

4.3.4 What crisis communication challenges did government institutions face in informing the public in Accra during the banking sector clean-up?

In the bustling heart of Accra, as the banking sector clean-up unfolded, a parallel crisis in communication left many residents navigating a fog of uncertainty. The challenges faced by government institutions in informing the public weren't just procedural failures; they were deeply human stories of confusion, anxiety, and exclusion.

For many, the first barrier was language. As one resident (P1) recalled,

"Language barrier was a big issue. Most announcements were in English, and I only understood when my children translated."

This reliance on second-hand translation often led to fractured understanding.

"I relied on my children to translate,"

P1 added, and iterated saying,

"Which sometimes led to misinterpretation of the facts."

Even for those who could access the official statements, the message was often lost in a maze of bureaucracy. The language was

"Too bureaucratic and lacked clarity,"

noted P2, further describing it as,

"Technical and inaccessible for ordinary people."

This complexity rendered some completely dependent on others.

"My understanding was near-zero,"

shared P3. P6 also noted that,

"I had to depend entirely on the kindness of others to know what was happening,"

A situation that bred feelings of helplessness and confusion.

Compounding this was a critical gap in reach. Official channels relied heavily on formal media newspapers and TV which many, like P7, simply couldn't access.

"Many poor residents, including myself, don't always have access to these,"

they spoke. This forced a reliance on an unreliable alternative: the rapid currents of social media and word-of-mouth. Here, misinformation thrived.

"Misinformation spread faster than the official statements,"

P4 observed. P2 added that,

"Social media rumours were rampant, making it hard to know what was true."

The constant anxiety of not being able to distinguish fact from fiction was exhausting.

The situation was further poisoned by the tone of the discourse. For P6, the communication became unbearable due to,

"Political mudslinging and contradictory statements,"

which ultimately made them

"Stop following the news altogether for weeks."

The contradictions drained public energy and eroded trust precisely when clarity was most needed.

This fog of communication was thickened by instances of delay and inaccuracy. Official information often arrived late, chasing rumours that had already sown panic.

"When the first microfinance company shut down,"

P7 remembered, and added that

"There was almost a full day of silence before any official word came."

Key details, like bailout costs, seemed to shift, making personal financial planning impossible. For P3, a damaging rumour that all their money was gone, though false, caused

"Days of stress and sleepless nights" before clarity arrived.

Yet, from this collective experience emerged clear visions for improvement. Residents called for a unified, apolitical voice, suggesting the appointment of

"A single, non-political crisis communication led to deliver unified messaging. We pleaded for radical transparency, a 'tell-it-all' strategy from the start to build trust"

according to P2. To bridge the access gap, ideas ranged from establishing

"Physical crisis information centres in every major neighbourhood, staffed with multilingual personnel"

Said P3, to leveraging verified official social media accounts on platforms like Twitter and WhatsApp for real-time updates.

The story of Accra's banking clean-up communication is a stark reminder that in a crisis, information is not just data, it is a lifeline. When that lifeline is tangled by inaccessibility, jargon, delay, or noise, the human cost is measured not just in cedis, but in stress, confusion, and a profound loss of trust.

Table 4.9 Recurring Themes - Communication-Related Challenges

Theme	Frequency	Description
Language & Accessibility	5	Official messages often in English or technical language, excluding some populations.
Misinformation & Rumours	3	Social media rumours spread faster than official information, causing confusion.
Delayed/Contradictory Updates	4	Conflicting or late information created uncertainty and anxiety.
Reliance on Formal Media	3	Newspapers and TV excluded low-income or rural audiences.

Recommended Improvements	5	Unified communication lead, multilingual centres, radio jingles, and verified social media channels are suggested.
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Communication challenges compounded public anxiety and mistrust. Language barriers and inaccessible channels excluded vulnerable populations, while delayed or conflicting information amplified rumours. Participants emphasised unified messaging, local-language channels, and accessible media to ensure accurate, timely, and inclusive communication during financial crises.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

4.4.1 General Views of Residents on the 2019 Banking Sector Crisis

The first objective sought to examine how residents of Accra perceived the 2019 banking sector crisis, particularly its impact on their financial stability, trust in financial institutions, and daily lives. Quantitative results revealed a heightened level of concern among participants regarding their finances during the crisis, with a mean score of 3.94 (SD = 1.291), indicating that the crisis elicited significant anxiety. Similarly, participants reported a substantial reduction in trust toward banks and other financial institutions (Mean = 3.84, SD = 1.266) and a sense of uncertainty regarding the safety of their savings (Mean = 3.71, SD = 1.300). These findings underscore the pervasive emotional and financial strain experienced by the public, echoing patterns identified by Osei and Mensah (2021), who observed that residents acknowledged the necessity of the reforms but felt abandoned due to insufficient communication.

Qualitative findings further contextualized these results. Interview participants described personal experiences of capital loss, disrupted business operations, and increased financial vulnerability. For instance, one trader recounted how a GHC10,000 fixed deposit matured but remained inaccessible for months, nearly forcing the closure of his shop. Pensioners and small-scale

entrepreneurs reported emotional distress, including hospitalisation due to stress-related complications, highlighting the broader psychosocial impact of the crisis. These lived experiences align closely with the observations of Adarkwa and Boateng (2022) and Forson and Gyimah Boadi (2024), who emphasised that financial shocks in Ghana disproportionately affect lower-income and vulnerable populations, often leading to long-term mistrust in formal financial institutions.

The findings can also be interpreted through the lens of Crisis Communication Theory (CCT). CCT posits that effective crisis management involves not only delivering timely and accurate information but also addressing public perceptions and reducing uncertainty (Coombs, 2015). In this study, the relatively low mean scores on statements about understanding the reasons behind the banking sector clean-up (Mean = 2.77, SD = 1.491) and accessing reliable information (Mean = 2.93, SD = 1.301) indicate a significant communication gap. Participants' accounts of confusion, delayed updates, and reliance on informal information sources illustrate how inadequate crisis communication exacerbated fear and mistrust, consistent with CCT's emphasis on proactive, audience-centered messaging to mitigate reputational and financial risks.

Similarly, Situational Theory of Publics (STP) helps explain variations in public response. According to STP, the level of an individual's problem recognition, constraint recognition, and level of involvement influences their communicative behavior (Grunig, 1997). In this context, residents who perceived high personal risk and uncertainty—such as traders and pensioners—were highly active in seeking additional information from social media, friends, and other informal sources (Mean = 3.47, SD = 1.325). Conversely, those with lower perceived risk, such as participants who reported moderate concern (e.g., Mean = 3.28 regarding daily financial impacts), were less likely to engage in active information-seeking behavior. These patterns reinforce the

notion that public perception during crises is shaped not only by the event itself but also by individual situational factors that drive engagement, comprehension, and trust.

The literature provides complementary support. Osei and Mensah (2021) and Adarkwa and Boateng (2022) highlighted that even when reforms are technically justified, poor communication strategies erode legitimacy and heighten anxiety. Participants in Forson and Gyimah Boadi's (2024) study echoed similar sentiments, describing the government's communication as unidirectional, technical, and insufficiently empathetic. In the present study, residents' narratives revealed a strong preference for accessible, empathetic communication, with several participants noting that the lack of personalized updates and clear explanations exacerbated their sense of vulnerability. These findings demonstrate that public evaluations of crisis management extend beyond economic rationale to encompass emotional and social dimensions, reinforcing both CCT and STP perspectives.

The findings for Objective 1 indicate that the 2019 banking sector crisis significantly affected residents of Accra financially, emotionally, and socially. Quantitative data confirmed high levels of concern, distrust, and perceived disruption in daily financial activities, while qualitative accounts provided nuanced illustrations of loss, stress, and adaptive strategies such as reliance on informal savings schemes. Both the literature and theoretical frameworks highlight the critical role of timely, clear, and empathetic communication in shaping public perception and mitigating adverse outcomes during financial crises.

4.4.2 Communication Channels and Strategies Used During the 2019 Banking Sector Reforms

The second objective of the study sought to identify the communication channels and strategies employed by government institutions during the 2019 banking sector crisis, as well as how

residents of Accra accessed and interpreted these messages. Quantitative results revealed that residents relied on a mix of media for updates. Traditional media, particularly radio (Mean = 3.87, SD = 1.224) and television (Mean = 3.65, SD = 1.187), were commonly used, while social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook also played a critical role (Mean = 3.73, SD = 1.301). Notably, official government channels like websites and press releases scored lower in accessibility and use (Mean = 2.88, SD = 1.243), suggesting limited reach and effectiveness.

Qualitative findings contextualised these patterns by illustrating how residents navigated the crisis through multiple channels. Participants reported relying heavily on local FM radio stations, community durbars, and word-of-mouth to receive updates. Social media, while fast and readily accessible, was often a source of confusion due to contradictory reports and rumours. For example, one participant noted that updates on Twitter and Facebook frequently contradicted official press releases, creating uncertainty about which information could be trusted. Other participants highlighted that community meetings and durbars sometimes provided clarity but were insufficient to reach all residents. These findings align with Eyifah (2021) and Aboagye and Boakye (2022), who emphasized that digital platforms offer speed and convenience but may amplify misinformation in the absence of timely and credible institutional communication.

From the perspective of Crisis Communication Theory (CCT), the findings suggest a partial failure in delivering effective crisis messages. CCT underscores the need for communication that is timely, accurate, and tailored to the audience (Coombs, 2015). While government efforts included press releases, TV briefings, and social media updates, the study revealed that the messages often lacked clarity, were too technical, and did not adequately address the needs of vulnerable populations. Participants' difficulty in understanding liquidity, capitalisation, and insolvency terms illustrates

how technical jargon undermined message efficacy, reinforcing the CCT principle that accessibility and comprehension are essential for mitigating public anxiety during crises.

Situational Theory of Publics (STP) further helps explain the observed differences in channel use and message reception. STP suggests that publics vary in problem recognition, constraint recognition, and level of involvement, which influence their information-seeking behaviour (Grunig, 1997). Highly involved residents, such as small-business owners or pensioners, actively sought multiple sources to verify information, including social media, radio, and community contacts. Conversely, less involved residents tended to passively receive updates from official sources, which were often delayed or technical, resulting in confusion or disengagement. This variation highlights the importance of matching communication strategies to the informational needs and capacities of different public segments.

The study also identifies critical shortcomings in the government communication strategy. Participants noted that reliance on formal media such as newspapers and television excluded low-income and rural populations, who may lack access or literacy to fully comprehend the messages. Delayed updates and reactive communication created gaps filled by rumours, further undermining trust. These findings mirror BudgIT Ghana (2022) and Eyifah (2021), who emphasised that the integration of radio, local languages, and participatory engagement, such as call-in programs, increases message credibility and retention. Forson and Gyimah Boadi (2024) also highlighted that residents preferred interactive, culturally relevant, and multi-channel approaches that included visual aids, jingles, and community-based explanations.

In practical terms, the findings suggest that effective crisis communication during financial reforms requires a multi-channel strategy that combines immediacy, credibility, and accessibility. Digital platforms can provide rapid updates but must be supplemented by traditional media to

ensure reach across socio-economic and literacy divides. Messages should avoid excessive technical language, incorporate local languages, and be delivered consistently across platforms to reduce confusion and prevent misinformation from filling the communication void. This aligns with the recommendations of Aboagye and Boakye (2022) and Eyifah (2021), reinforcing the need for tailored, inclusive, and audience-centred crisis communication.

In summary, the findings for Objective 2 reveal that while multiple channels were deployed, effectiveness was hindered by technical jargon, delayed updates, and uneven accessibility. Residents actively engaged with both traditional and digital media, often cross-verifying information due to mistrust in official channels. The application of CCT and STP highlights the importance of timely, clear, and audience-adapted messaging, emphasising that crisis communication must be both strategic and inclusive to maintain trust and guide public understanding effectively during financial crises.

4.4.3 Assessment of Satisfaction with Government Communication During the 2019 Banking Sector Reforms

Objective 3 sought to assess the level of satisfaction among affected residents of Accra regarding the government's communication strategies during the financial sector reforms. Quantitative results indicate generally low satisfaction levels. The mean scores for satisfaction-related items ranged from 2.64 to 2.86 on a 5-point scale, with the statement "Government communication strategies should be improved for future crises" scoring the highest (Mean = 3.93, SD = 1.317), reflecting participants' perception that communication was inadequate and required improvement. Other indicators, including clarity, empathy, and reassurance, all scored below the mid-point, suggesting that government communication did not fully meet the needs or expectations of residents during the crisis.

Qualitative findings offer depth to these numbers. Many participants expressed frustration with technical language, delayed updates, and a lack of personalised or community-targeted messaging. For example, one trader (P1) described being “very dissatisfied” because government statements were filled with technical jargon that made it impossible to plan business recovery, while a pensioner (P3) felt “completely ignored” by communication that was oriented toward the elite rather than ordinary citizens. Several participants noted that while regulatory explanations were sometimes accurate, they provided little practical guidance for coping with the financial disruptions. These insights align closely with the quantitative findings, reinforcing the view that residents’ satisfaction was low across multiple dimensions, including clarity, relevance, timeliness, and empathy.

The findings resonate with existing literature. Mensima and Asare (2020) reported that only 28% of residents were very satisfied with government communication during the banking crisis, while over 47% expressed dissatisfaction due to delays and over-reliance on English-language channels. Similarly, Teye and Addo (2023) highlighted that communication often lacked empathy and was overly technical, with participants noting that government messages “talked like we were economists,” alienating ordinary citizens. These studies corroborate the current findings and suggest that satisfaction is strongly influenced not just by the factual content of messages but by their accessibility, tone, and perceived consideration of citizens’ needs.

Applying Crisis Communication Theory (CCT), the low satisfaction scores reflect shortcomings in key CCT principles, particularly timeliness, transparency, and audience-centred messaging (Coombs, 2015). CCT emphasises that effective crisis communication must reduce uncertainty and provide actionable information that addresses public concerns. In this study, participants reported that updates were often delayed or delivered using technical language that hindered understanding,

undermining the potential for reassurance and confidence-building. The absence of empathetic messaging further weakened trust, a critical component of CCT in managing public perception during crises.

The Situational Theory of Publics (STP) provides further insight into the variation in satisfaction levels. STP posits that individuals' problem recognition, constraint recognition, and level of involvement shape their engagement with communication (Grunig, 1997). Highly involved participants, such as small business owners or individuals with direct financial losses, actively sought multiple sources to navigate the crisis. Their dissatisfaction was amplified when official communication failed to meet their informational needs. Less involved residents were often passive recipients of technical updates, which left them confused or disengaged. Thus, the theory helps explain why satisfaction varied according to personal stakes, engagement level, and the accessibility of information.

The study also identified key factors that contributed to dissatisfaction and offered lessons for improvement. Participants emphasized the need for multilingual communication, simplified explanations, and personalized updates delivered through accessible channels such as SMS, radio, and community centres. Forson and Gyimah Boadi (2024) similarly reported that residents preferred participatory, culturally relevant, and interactive communication strategies. Collectively, these insights suggest that satisfaction is contingent not only on content but also on the mode of delivery, the perceived responsiveness of authorities, and the degree to which communication addresses citizens' emotional and practical concerns.

In conclusion, the findings for Objective 3 indicate that government communication during the 2019 banking sector crisis achieved limited satisfaction among affected residents. Both quantitative and qualitative data reveal shortcomings in clarity, empathy, timeliness, and

accessibility. These results align with CCT and STP, underscoring the importance of audience-centered, timely, and transparent communication strategies to build trust, reduce anxiety, and enhance public satisfaction during financial crises. Future policy and crisis communication frameworks should prioritize multi-channel outreach, plain language explanations, and culturally appropriate engagement to better meet the needs of diverse publics.

4.4.4 Communication-Related Challenges Faced by Government Institutions

Objective 4 aimed to explore the communication-related challenges encountered by government institutions in disseminating crisis information to the public in Accra during the 2019 banking sector reforms. The quantitative data reveal several notable barriers. Mean scores for items measuring communication challenges ranged from 3.18 to 4.16, with the highest score observed for “Government institutions need to improve their crisis communication strategies” (Mean = 4.16, SD = 1.085), highlighting a widespread perception that existing strategies were inadequate. Other high-scoring items, such as delayed communication, contradictory information, unequal reach, and limited opportunities for public feedback, further indicate systemic shortcomings in crisis messaging.

Qualitative insights complement these statistics by providing depth and context. Participants consistently reported that official messages were often delivered in technical English, inaccessible to many residents, especially those with lower literacy levels or who relied on vernacular languages. Participant P1 explained that “most announcements were in English, and I only understood when my children translated,” while P4 emphasised the rapid spread of misinformation through social media due to official delays. Several participants noted that government communication was reactive rather than proactive, with updates frequently following crisis events rather than anticipating public concerns. The over-reliance on formal media such as newspapers and television

also excluded vulnerable populations, including low-income and rural residents (P7). Contradictory statements from different institutions or political actors compounded confusion, leaving participants anxious and uncertain about which information to trust.

The literature aligns closely with these findings. Asiedu and Baffoe (2021) highlighted bureaucratic bottlenecks and poor inter-agency coordination, noting that statements from the Bank of Ghana were often not synchronized with the Ministry of Finance's announcements, leading to contradictions. Similarly, Ocran and Dadzie (2022) emphasized structural and logistical constraints, including insufficient communication capacity at the district level and limited translation of statements into local languages, which reduced accessibility. Eyifah (2021) and Aboagye and Boakye (2022) further underscored the public's reliance on social media and radio, reflecting both the limitations of formal government channels and the necessity of multi-channel strategies to reach diverse publics effectively.

From a Crisis Communication Theory (CCT) perspective, these challenges illustrate failures in core crisis communication principles. CCT stresses the importance of timely, accurate, and audience-centered communication to mitigate uncertainty, reduce panic, and maintain trust (Coombs, 2015). The prevalence of delayed, technical, or inconsistent messages, as revealed by both quantitative and qualitative findings, undermined the government's ability to provide reassurance or actionable guidance. Misalignment between agencies and inadequate attention to local contexts amplified public anxiety and contributed to widespread distrust.

The Situational Theory of Publics (STP) further helps to explain how these communication challenges affected different segments of the population. According to STP, publics vary in problem recognition, constraint recognition, and level of involvement (Grunig, 1997). Highly involved residents, such as business owners directly affected by bank closures, actively sought

information and were acutely sensitive to delays or contradictions. Conversely, less involved individuals were often passive recipients of official communication, but even they were impacted by inaccessible language and delayed updates. Both groups experienced confusion and anxiety, underscoring the need for tailored, accessible, and proactive messaging that considers varying levels of engagement and informational needs.

Participants also offered concrete recommendations to improve communication during similar crises, echoing CCT and STP principles. These included appointing a unified communication lead to prevent contradictory messages, establishing community-based information centres staffed by multilingual personnel, and using radio jingles or SMS broadcasts to reach diverse populations. Qualitative findings also emphasised combating misinformation proactively, suggesting that verified social media accounts and rapid official rebuttals could reduce public reliance on rumours and unverified sources. These suggestions are consistent with Eyifah (2021) and BudgIT Ghana (2022), who stressed that interactive, participatory, and culturally relevant communication strategies enhance both reach and trust.

In conclusion, the study finds that communication-related challenges during the 2019 banking sector reforms were multifaceted, encompassing technical, structural, linguistic, and procedural barriers. These challenges exacerbated public confusion, mistrust, and emotional distress, particularly among vulnerable populations. Integration with CCT and STP highlights the importance of timely, clear, audience-centred, and proactive communication to manage crises effectively. Future policy frameworks should prioritise coordinated messaging, multi-channel dissemination, and inclusive communication approaches to ensure equitable access, reduce misinformation, and enhance public trust during financial crises.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a synthesis of the study's key findings, drawing together insights from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses. It provides a concise summary of how residents of Accra experienced the 2019 banking sector reforms, their perceptions of government communication strategies, and the challenges encountered during the crisis. Based on these findings, the chapter offers conclusions that highlight the implications for policy and practice, followed by practical recommendations aimed at improving future crisis communication and enhancing public trust in financial governance.

5.2 Summary

This study sought to interrogate public perception of government communication strategies during the 2019 microfinance and bank shutdowns in Ghana. Employing a concurrent triangulation mixed-methods research design, the study integrated qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys to achieve comprehensive insights. The research was conducted in selected communities within Accra, with a study population comprising residents directly and indirectly affected by the reforms. A multi-stage sampling technique was utilized, resulting in a sample of 20 participants for in-depth interviews and 100 respondents for the structured questionnaire, ensuring both depth and breadth in data collection.

The findings corresponding to the first objective revealed that residents experienced the banking sector crisis as a period of profound devastation. Quantitative data indicated high levels of financial anxiety, a significant erosion of trust in financial institutions, and widespread disruption to daily economic activities. Qualitatively, participants described severe personal losses, emotional distress,

and a resulting shift towards informal savings mechanisms, highlighting a deep and lasting impact on financial behavior and community well-being.

Regarding the second objective, which focused on communication channels and strategies, the study found that the government utilized a mix of traditional media (radio, television), digital platforms (social media, websites), and community engagements. However, this multi-channel approach was largely ineffective. Messages were often criticized as being overly technical, delayed, and reactive rather than proactive. A critical disconnect was identified between the formal, bureaucratic language of official communications and the need for clear, accessible, and actionable information for the general public.

Assessment of the third objective, the level of public satisfaction, demonstrated overwhelmingly negative perceptions. Both survey data and interview responses reflected low satisfaction scores, driven by communication that was perceived as lacking empathy, failing to provide practical guidance, and being insufficiently reassuring. Participants felt that the communication strategy was tailored for an elite or regulatory audience, leaving ordinary citizens feeling confused, anxious, and ignored during a critical period.

Finally, the study identified several critical communication challenges, aligning with the fourth objective. These included significant language and accessibility barriers, over-reliance on formal media that excluded vulnerable populations, the rapid spread of misinformation through unofficial channels, and poor coordination among government institutions leading to contradictory messages. From these challenges, residents proposed concrete improvements, such as appointing a unified, apolitical communication lead, utilizing plain language and local dialects, and establishing community-based information centers to bridge the gap between policymakers and the public.

5.3 Conclusion

This study concludes that the 2019 banking sector crisis in Accra had profound financial, social, and psychological impacts on residents, which were exacerbated by deficiencies in government communication strategies. While the reforms were largely recognised as necessary for restoring financial stability and regulatory compliance, the manner in which information was disseminated undermined public trust and heightened anxiety. The study finds that government communication was often fragmented, delayed, overly technical, and inaccessible to certain segments of the population, particularly low-income, low-literacy, and vulnerable groups. These shortcomings contributed to the spread of misinformation, confusion, and a general sense of exclusion among affected residents.

The analysis also shows that residents' satisfaction with government communication was limited. Participants reported that updates lacked empathy, personalisation, and actionable guidance, reflecting a disconnect between regulatory objectives and the informational needs of the public. The qualitative evidence highlights how emotional distress, financial insecurity, and social disruption shaped public perceptions, with many residents turning to informal financial practices due to eroded trust in formal institutions.

These findings align with Crisis Communication Theory (CCT), which emphasises the importance of transparency, timeliness, consistency, and audience-centred messaging in mitigating uncertainty and preserving trust during crises. Similarly, the Situational Theory of Publics (STP) provides a useful lens for understanding variations in information-seeking behaviour, showing that residents with higher problem recognition actively sought accurate information, while others remained passive due to limited access or mistrust.

The study demonstrates that effective crisis management extends beyond the technical and regulatory rationale for reform. The success of such interventions depends heavily on inclusive, clear, timely, and empathetic communication that considers the diverse needs of the public. Strengthening coordination among government agencies, employing multi-channel communication strategies, and ensuring accessibility for all residents are crucial steps toward building trust, reducing misinformation, and enhancing resilience in the face of financial crises.

5.4 Recommendation

Based directly on the empirical findings of this study, it is recommended that the government adopt a unified, apolitical, and empathetic strategic framework for crisis communication. The research revealed that fragmented messaging and contradictory statements, often delivered amidst political point-scoring, significantly eroded public trust. Participants explicitly called for a single, credible, and non-political authority to lead communication. Therefore, appointing a designated Crisis Communication Lead, a respected technocrat insulated from political rhetoric, to deliver consistent, transparent messaging is paramount. This approach must be grounded in a "tell-it-all" strategy of radical transparency, proactively sharing information to build legitimacy, and must consistently employ an empathetic tone that acknowledges public hardship rather than relying solely on detached, technical explanations.

To bridge the critical gap between government messaging and public understanding, it is essential to implement audience-centred and accessible communication practices. The findings clearly show that the pervasive use of complex English and technical jargon rendered official communications incomprehensible to many citizens, directly fuelling dissatisfaction and feelings of exclusion. Consequently, all crisis messages must be crafted in clear, plain language and actively translated into major local dialects. As suggested by participants, leveraging culturally resonant formats such

as short radio jingles, visual infographics, and community drama in local languages can dramatically improve comprehension and retention, ensuring vital information reaches all demographic groups, especially those with low literacy or limited formal education.

Furthermore, the government must diversify and strategically leverage trusted, multi-channel dissemination networks to ensure equitable information access. The study identified a problematic over-reliance on formal media channels like newspapers and television, which many low-income residents could not reliably access, creating an information vacuum quickly filled by social media rumours. A more effective strategy must prioritise Ghana's most ubiquitous and trusted medium, local FM radio, for broad reach and credibility. This should be integrated with verified official social media platforms for real-time updates and rumour management and supplemented by SMS alerts for urgent notices. Most importantly, to address the exclusion of vulnerable populations, the strategy must decentralise through the establishment of physical neighbourhood information centres, staffed with multilingual officers who can provide direct, interactive support and clarification.

Finally, rebuilding the shattered trust documented in this study requires a fundamental shift from reactive, one-way announcements to proactive, two-way public engagement. The research consistently showed that government communication was delayed and reactive, arriving only after public panic had set in and misinformation had spread. To counter this, a proactive posture of regular, scheduled updates and pre-emptive guidance must be adopted. Crucially, the government must create structured and well-publicised feedback mechanisms, such as dedicated helplines, community fora, and interactive media sessions. This commitment to listening and responding directly to citizens' concerns is not merely an add-on but a necessary foundation for demonstrating

accountability and fostering the collaborative confidence needed to navigate future crises successfully.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Studies

To build upon this research, future studies should expand their scope through a comparative analysis with other regions in Ghana and similar financial crises in neighbouring countries to better understand contextual and cultural dynamics in crisis communication. Longitudinal research is also needed to track the long-term evolution of public trust and financial behaviour in the aftermath of such reforms. Further investigation could focus on specific mechanisms, such as the precise role and counterstrategies for digital misinformation on platforms like WhatsApp and employ experimental designs to test the efficacy of proposed communication improvements, like simplified local-language messaging versus technical releases. Theoretically, applying the Situational Theory of Publics (STP) to develop segmented communication protocols for distinct audience groups could offer more tailored strategies, while exploratory research into participatory models, where affected communities co-create crisis messages, could provide innovative pathways to restore legitimacy and public resilience.

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APPENDICES

QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed to collect information on public perceptions of government communication strategies during the 2019 microfinance and bank shutdowns in Ghana. All responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic research. Participation is voluntary, and you may skip any question or withdraw at any time.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Age:

- 18–25
- 26–35
- 36–45
- 46–55
- 56+

2. Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

3. Occupation:

- Student
- Public sector worker
- Private sector worker
- Self-employed
- Unemployed
- Other: _____

4. Level of education:

- No formal education

- Basic/JHS
- SHS/Secondary
- Tertiary (Diploma/Bachelor)
- Postgraduate

5. Area of residence in Accra:

- Central Accra
- North Accra
- East Accra
- West Accra
- Other: _____

SECTION B: GENERAL VIEWS AND CHALLENGES OF RESIDENTS

Please indicate your agreement with each statement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I was concerned about my finances during the 2019 banking sector crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The banking sector crisis affected my ability to access financial services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The crisis reduced my trust in banks and other financial institutions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I received timely information about the banking sector crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The crisis had a noticeable impact on my daily financial activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The crisis created uncertainty about the safety of my savings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I fully understood the reasons behind the banking sector clean-up when it was announced.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The banking sector crisis negatively affected the financial well-being of my household.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was able to easily verify the information I received about the crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The crisis affected my confidence in depositing money in financial institutions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I felt anxious or stressed about the future of my financial situation during the crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The crisis affected how I planned or managed my finances during that period.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I sought additional information from non-government sources (e.g., social media, friends, banks) during the crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My community was significantly affected by the banking sector crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The banking sector crisis changed my long-term perception of the financial sector.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION C: GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AND STRATEGIES

Please indicate your agreement with each statement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The government communicated through multiple platforms to reach different groups of residents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The communication strategies used by the government were well-coordinated across different agencies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The government provided regular updates as the banking sector reforms progressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The messages from government institutions were consistent across television, radio, and social media.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The government provided enough explanations to clarify misinformation and rumours about the crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The communication tone used by the government was reassuring and appropriate for a crisis situation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The communication strategy used enabled me to understand the actions taken during the banking sector clean-up.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The government engaged the public effectively through interactive platforms (e.g., interviews, press briefings, Q&A sessions).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I felt the government targeted the right communication channels for affected residents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Government communication reached me before misinformation spread from unofficial sources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Government communication during the crisis was proactive rather than reactive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The communication channels used by the government were accessible to all categories of residents, including vulnerable groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Government communication provided actionable steps for affected customers to follow during the banking reforms.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The frequency of government communication was adequate for keeping residents informed throughout the crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication from government sources appeared credible and trustworthy during the banking sector clean-up.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION D: SATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION

Please indicate your agreement with each statement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I was satisfied with the information provided by the government during the 2019 banking sector crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Government communication met my expectations in helping me cope with the crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Government communication reassured me during the crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Government communication strategies should be improved for future crises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The government provided adequate explanations to help me understand the reasons behind the banking sector reforms.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I felt that my concerns and questions as a resident were sufficiently addressed in government communication.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The government demonstrated empathy and consideration for affected residents in its communication.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I trusted the accuracy of information shared by government sources throughout the crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The government's communication frequency (timing and regularity) was satisfactory.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The information provided by the government reduced confusion and uncertainty about the crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The communication materials (press releases, broadcasts, online posts) were professionally presented.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall, I was satisfied with the government's approach to crisis communication during the banking sector clean-up.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION E: COMMUNICATION-RELATED CHALLENGES

Please indicate your agreement with each statement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Government communication was sometimes delayed during the crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Some information from government sources was unclear or inconsistent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I faced difficulty accessing accurate information throughout the crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Government institutions need to improve their crisis communication strategies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The communication provided by government institutions did not adequately address misinformation and rumours.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information provided by different government institutions sometimes contradicted each other.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Updates about the crisis were not provided frequently enough to keep residents fully informed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Government communication did not reach all affected residents equally.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I found it difficult to verify whether the information shared about the crisis was credible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The government did not provide enough opportunities for public feedback or clarification.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technical challenges (e.g., poor network connectivity, limited digital access) affected my ability to receive crisis information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The government relied too heavily on certain communication channels, reducing accessibility for some groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Government communication did not provide timely responses to emerging public concerns during the crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The communication style employed by government sources made it difficult to understand the severity of the crisis fully.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Government institutions did not coordinate effectively in delivering consistent information to the public.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Thank You.

Interview Guide

Introduction

This interview guide aims to explore public perceptions of government communication strategies during the 2019 microfinance and bank shutdowns in Ghana. Please be assured that any information you provide will be kept strictly confidential, and all data provided will be used solely for research purposes. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to answer any question or withdraw at any time you please. The interview will be recorded via audio with your consent.

Consent Confirmation

- Written consent obtained: **Yes**
 - No**
 - Verbal consent confirmed: **Yes**
 - No**
-

Section A: Demographics

1. Age:
2. Gender:
3. Occupation:
4. Level of education:
5. Area of residence:

Section B: Interview Questions

Objective 1: To ascertain the general views of residents in selected areas of Accra on the 2019 banking sector crisis

1. How would you describe your overall experience during the 2019 banking sector crisis?
 - Follow-up: Give a specific incident or example that shaped your experience?
2. What were your initial thoughts when the microfinance and banks were shut down?
 - Follow-up: How did these thoughts influence your trust in the financial system?
3. In your opinion, how did the crisis affect the daily lives of residents in your community?

- Follow-up: Highlight any long-term effects you have noticed since the crisis?

Objective 2: To identify the specific communication channels and strategies employed by the government in managing the banking crisis within Accra

1. Which communication channels did you notice government used to disseminate information during the crisis?
 - Follow-up: Which of these channels was most effective to you and why?
2. How did the government communicate updates about the banking crisis?
 - Follow-up: Were the messages clear and timely? Please explain in your own opinion.
3. Were there any communication strategies by the government that you found confusing or ineffective?
 - Follow-up: Kindly suggest ways these strategies could have been improved?

Objective 3: To assess the level of satisfaction among affected residents of Accra regarding the government's communication strategies during the financial sector reforms

1. How satisfied were you with the information provided by the government during the crisis?
 - Follow-up: What factors influenced your level of satisfaction?
2. Did the communication from the government meet your expectations in helping you cope with the crisis?
 - Follow-up: Describe any instances where it met or failed your expectations.
3. Would you say the government communication reassured you during the banking sector reforms?
 - Follow-up: How could this reassurance have been improved?

Objective 4: To explore the communication-related challenges faced by government institutions in disseminating crisis information to the public in Accra during the banking sector clean-up

1. What challenges did you notice in how government institutions communicated about the crisis?

- Follow-up: How did these challenges affect your understanding of the crisis?
- 2. Were there instances when information was delayed or inaccurate?
 - Follow-up: How did you respond to such situations?
- 3. What improvements do you think could be made in government communication during similar financial crisis?
 - Follow-up: Which method would you recommend for reaching residents more effectively?

Thank you for participating...