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SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH (SOGSaR)

**AN EVALUATION OF CRISIS COMMUNICATION PRACTICES IN THE GHANAIAN
TELECOMMUNICATION INDUSTRY**

BY

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**A LONG ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND
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FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE
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OCTOBER, 2020

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the work presented is the result of my own effort, original research and findings and that no part of it has been presented for another degree or diploma in this University or elsewhere. All references to other people's work have been duly acknowledged. I am therefore to be held responsible for any error that might be detected in this project work.

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Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Israel Norshie Asiwome', written in a cursive style.

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

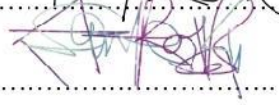
I hereby declare that the preparation of this long essay was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for the supervision of long essays as laid down by the Ghana Institute of Journalism.

Name: Dr. Rabiya K.B Asante

Date:

2/10/2020

Sign.....



DEDICATION

First and foremost this piece is dedicated to God Almighty as a token of my appreciation for his sufficient grace, mercy and knowledge he has blessed me with. Secondly I dedicate it to my indefatigable supervisor Dr. Rabiou K.B Asante because his understanding, patience and guidance without which I would not have completed this research work. Lastly, I dedicate this to my family and to every young person who has a dream.

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ABSTRACT

The research generally seeks to assess the crisis communication practices in selected telecommunication companies in Ghana. This study adopted a qualitative approach to social science research and used the explorative research design, which best suited the objective of seeking to evaluate the crisis communication practices in the Ghanaian telecommunication industry. A purposive sampling method was used and data was collected using the interview guide administered in English. The researcher proposed the of semi-structured interview guide to elicit relevant data. The use of a thematic analysis approach will help generate meanings useful to resolve the research objectives based on the transcriptions of the interviews.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

In today's business world and society, crises are inevitable and necessitate the ability to manage them (Gebeyehu, 2018). A crisis is conventionally said to be an unforeseen event or phenomenon that affects an organization or individuals and may lead to financial losses and damage reputations, or can affect stakeholder relations (Coombs, 2010; Pearson & Clair, 1998; Ulmer, Sellnow & Seeger, 2007). These crisis situations pose risks to the lives of people and the sustainability of organizations (Coombs, 2010). Such crisis situations in the long run also has the tendency to cut off the prospects of businesses and expectation of stakeholders (Heath, 2012) and also can undermine the integrity of a business, hence the need for a better management of crisis. Scholars through their researches have postulated that an effective use of crisis communication such as responding quickly, efficiently, and effectively in times of crisis plays a significant role in managing, transforming and diluting the crisis situation. (Coombs, 2010c; Fediuk, Coombs & Botero, 2010).

Crisis communication is described as a plan containing communication strategy that seeks to safeguard an organization and well-position it to manage prospective and real crises and events, the plan also includes collecting and circulating crisis-related information to stakeholders (Fearn- Banks, 2016 p.2). In most instances, the approaches adopted in handling and managing information during crisis contributes immeasurably to the rebuilding and return to normality of organizations and repairing of their reputation (Zuzak & Konigova, 2009, p. 50-55). Albeit the bottlenecks that crisis situations come with, successfully managing them has the potential to strengthen stakeholders' trust and augment the organizations reputation (Šontaitė-Petkeviciene, 2014, p.4531; Motarjemi, 2014, p.1053).

This to say that, a crisis situation is not only a negative phenomenon but the management of the situation effectively can also do the organization a lot of good. It must be noted that, communication failures during crises pose a danger to stakeholders (Lanard & Sandman, 2014; Levinson, 2014; McKay, 2015). Communication is the critical component of crisis management this according to the Handbook of Crisis Communication (2010:17). The above comes to entrench the position that, the success or failure of managing crises is dependent on how an organization uses communication before, during, and after a crisis as this is vital in determining the organization's ability to recover from the crisis (Zaremba, 2010).

According to Hargis and Watt (2010), crises situations can be faced at any stage of an organization's life cycle, this is because risks are divers and sometimes don't sound warnings when coming. An individual or organization is best positioned if they have the ability to identify the potential crisis that can hit them, this will afford them the opportunity to plan, prepare and better manage the potential risks that are associated with crisis i.e.; public safety, financial loss and reputational loss , (www.instituteforpr, 2014). Notwithstanding the above statements on how the effective management of crisis can be helpful to an organization, repeatedly, most organizations take the reactive approach: waiting for crisis to happen and then they engage in firefighting. Sometimes, irrespective of the efforts put into damage control, a negative perception is hard to erase. In place of the firefighting, crisis prevention is a better approach (Gabrowski Mark, 2010).

Dzenan, (2017) motioned that just when one may be thinking that the worse is behind us, new crisis arises, it is almost as if we are living in one everlasting world of crisis. Many individuals and organizations worldwide have experienced crisis situations that threatened their very existence, from the worldwide pandemic Covid-19 that has both affected individuals and organizations WHO (2020). Example of other crisis situations that were

carried out by credible news portals such as the CNN will be that of Eldrick Tont Tiger Woods, an American professional golfer's mid-life crisis, the BP oil rig explosion in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 which resulted in millions of gallons of oil spilt, the recent financial sector crises in Ghana, the Melcom building collapse in Achimota, Ghana, the nationwide energy crisis of ECG in Ghana and also the poor network challenges experienced in Ghana by the major telecommunication service providers.

According to (Coombs, 2015), research's conducted into crisis communication practices have brought to bear some useful and clearly defined procedures for practice that often placed emphasis on the need for the accountability of organizations in crisis among others. Most articles reviewed for this study placed emphasis on the need for an open and responsible communication which suggest that the organizations should steal thunder: This to say that the organizations or individuals themselves should divulge incriminating information instead of making an attempt to hide it or to engage in needless propaganda during crises (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012).

Notwithstanding all the efforts and gains made, the mind-bugling question here remains: are these guidelines known and understood by practitioners, if yes, how do they apply them in practice. Some available literature suggests that practitioners acknowledge the value of stealing thunder and other strategies but rarely self-disclose crises or practice these guidelines during crisis (Kline, Simunich, & Weber, 2009; Ulmer, 2012). As such, there might be a gap: meaning their might be available theoretical guidelines or policy documents on crisis communication which is accessible and understood by practitioners in organizations but the willpower to practice them may be missing.

According to Osei-Owusu (2018), Ghana was among the few first African countries that progressed from a government- controlled Telecommunication (Telco's) market to a much

more competitive market, with well-organized private sector participation. Though there is liberalization, Government has not seized playing its role in creating an enabling environment for growth and regulates the sector appropriately as overseen by the National Communication Authority under the Ministry of Communication which was established in 1997.

According to inewsafrika.com (2015), The Telecom industry in Ghana has been a driver for economic growth, representing 7 percent of investment in Ghana, forms 10 percent of government income and 2 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2010. This places the telecommunication industry not only as an essential service provider but a contributor to government revenue, not forgetting they are responsible for connecting the 30 MILLION Ghanaians both via call and Data. This place the industry in the bracket of essential service providers hence the need to better manage crisis in the sector.

According to Darling (1994), a crisis could be seen as both a hampering phenomenon and also an opportunity to an organization, as the Chinese word for crisis wei-ji (a dangerous opportunity) double confirms. This highlights the importance of the topic, hence the need to delve dipper into it. Individuals and organizations must be well prepared for any crisis situation that may befall them to help them to properly plan, respond and maneuver their way through. It is in this context that this study seeks to evaluates the crisis communication practices of players in the telecommunication industry in Ghana but will select some telecommunication service providers such as MTN Ghana, Vodafone and AirtelTigo.

1.2 Statement of the problem

No organization is exempted from crises (Bernstein, 2013). Hence, the need for effective and efficient crisis communication cannot be taken for granted as a crisis situation is capable of

destroying an organizations image and reputation and by extension the business as a whole (Fearn-Banks, 2007).

According to Coombs & Holladay, (2008) Research conducted suggests that what organizations decide to do before, during and after crisis - crisis response strategies - goes a long way to guarding organizations reputation. Notwithstanding, most post crisis communication research has relied on case study methods which could offer valued descriptive data but they offer little or no insight into how stakeholders actually respond to crisis. According to Dean (2004) case studies offer insignificant theoretical understanding of crisis communication. Though there are a lot of research conducted into crisis communication, there is still a need for a research regarding the applicability of communication strategies, and stakeholder consideration, scholars suggest (Coombs, 2010b; Heath, 2012). Theorization of communication studies in Africa has generally been under-represented in main- stream literature although there are few classical works.

Based on articles reviewed for this study by kiambi and Shafer (2016), Boudreaux (2005), Gebeyehu (2018), Mazzei (2014), Abdullah and Antony (2012), and Kukule (2012) just to mention a few, it's evident that there has been more works done in this area outside Africa but little has been done in Africa, especially in Ghana where only one article of Ampofo-Bekoe (2014) was reviewed though our telecommunication industry have experienced a number of crisis situations but there has been little or no investigation and proper documentation. Mare (2020) concurred with the above assertion by stating that there is an under representation of both empirical and theoretical literature from Africa to the main stream literature in the field although there are some classical works by Africans. Therefore, the study will use an explorative research design to show who does what, when it's done during the crisis phase and the how they are done. Research questions from this study attempts to bring to the fore the research gaps: what telco's do regarding crisis

communication formally that we don't know, the role of the public relations or corporate affairs department (practitioners) before, during and post crisis, it also investigates policy documents or road maps available and the divers strategies employed during a crisis situation in the various phases. Additionally, the study investigates the effectiveness of the crisis communication strategies deployed and challenges.

1.3 Research Objectives

The research generally seeks to assess the crisis communication practices in selected telecommunication companies in Ghana. At the end of the study, the researcher expects to achieve the following specific objectives.

1. To identify the crisis communication methods/strategies used by telecommunication companies in Ghana.
2. To establish the effectiveness of this methods or strategies adopted
3. To examine how crisis communication forms a part of management's overall strategy.

1.4 Research Questions

The study developed the following questions to guide researcher's quest to finding solutions to the research problems:

1. What crisis communication methods/strategies are used by telecommunication companies in Ghana?
2. How effective are this methods or strategies adopted?
3. How does crisis communication form a part of management strategy?

1.5 Significance of the study

This study will not only fill the void in literature with respect to crisis communication practices in Ghana's telco industry but will provide a blue print for use in times of crisis as it documents and makes available the best practices deployed by telco companies who are getting it right and also propose same to others with no crisis communication strategies and policy document that guides their practice. This comes off on the back of available literature which suggests that when crises situations are planned for, managed and strategies are well executed, it might provide an opportunity for the organization.

The telco industry players through this research will have a tried and tested approach to handling crisis situations and also crisis communication strategies that are time-relevant. The study also will serve as a new body of knowledge and will add up to the already exiting literature on crisis communication and serve as a reference guide for future studies.

1.6 Scope of the study

This study focuses on three telco companies in Ghana namely, MTN Ghana who are leaders in the industry, Vodafone Ghana and Airteltigo. The practitioners in these organizations in charge of crisis communication or strategy development in relation to communication are considered as part of the study.

1.7 Organization of the Study

The study is divided into five (5) different chapters. The first chapter provided the primary introduction of the study. It proposes the extensive construction inherent in this study and thus, provided adequate background of information to allow readers understand the reasons behind this study and what it intends to accomplish. The chapter gives an overview of the

whole study. This comprises of background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance, scope and organization of the study. Chapter Two of the work reviews earlier theoretical and empirical research related to the research topic with specific reference to the research objectives. It presents extracts from books, journals and collected works that are helpful in carrying out this research and justifying key conclusions and recommendations. Chapter three dealt with the methodology of the study thus, how data was collected, organized and analyzed. It suggests the varied techniques and tools used to collect and analyses data to gain valid results. Chapter Four provides research findings and data analysis obtained through the methodology outlined in chapter three and Chapter Five gives a summary of findings, conclusions from the study and recommendations for users of the research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature in relation to crisis communication and has been organized into two distinct parts: Theoretical and Empirical literature. The theoretical literature reviews theories and concepts on crisis communication while the empirical reviewed already conducted studies by others in the same field of study. The literature review further breaks the empirical review into clear and concise themes related to the research objectives and adds a conceptual framework that is necessary for the understanding of the study.

2.1 Definition of Concepts

2.1.1 Definition of crisis

There are no standardized definitions for the term crisis but some few characteristics stand out and give a heads up and a background into what a crisis situation may be said to be: significant threat(s), unpredictability, and urgency (Coombs 1999, 2007; Falkheimer and Heide 2006). Barton (1993, p. 2) defined crisis as a major unpredictable event that has potentially negative results. The happenings may leave an organization in bad state with effects on employees, products, services, financial condition, as well as reputation.

Similarly, Fearn-Banks (1996, p. 1) considered a crisis a major unpredictable event that has potentially negative outcome affecting an organization, company, or industry, as well as its publics, products, services, or good name. Coombs (1999, 2007) more clearly addressed the similar characters by defining crisis as an event that is an unpredictable, a major threat that can have a negative effect on the organization, industry, or stakeholders if handled improperly.

More recently, he fleshed out this definition saying, a crisis is a sudden and unexpected event that threatens to disrupt an organization's operations and poses both a financial and reputational threat (2007, p. 164). He further classified it by adding onto the crisis definition saying, the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organization's performance and generate negative outcomes (2010, p. 19). Institute for Crisis Management, a research-based crisis management consulting firm in the United States, defines a crisis as a significant business disruption that stimulates extensive news media coverage. The resulting public scrutiny will affect the organization's normal operations and also could have a political, legal, financial, and governmental impact on its business (Gower 2006). In sum, crises are unusual occurrences that cannot be predicted but are expected and entail significant threats (Coombs 2010 Gower 2006).

This study will use the definition of crisis as defined by Coombs 2010 and Gower 2006 because the definition is recent and encompasses most of the relevant characteristics of crisis as it's an unpredicted event but expected and comes along with substantial risks that can exit the business existence if not well managed.

2.1.2 Definition of communication

Communication can be described as the process of transferring, information or knowledge and common understanding from one person to another (Keyton, 2011). The word communication is said to result from the Latin expression, communis, which means normal. Communication hinges on shared meaning and the definition highlights that fact that there is no communication unless there is a mutual understanding arising from the exchange of the said information.

2.1.3 Definition of crisis communication

According to Fishman (1999:348) Crisis communication is a phenomenon that comprises an interaction between divers' stakeholders internal and external in a continuously fluctuating atmosphere and obliges effective communication for maintaining these relationships. Fearn-Banks (2007:9) reiterated this saying, crisis communication is the interaction between an organization and its stakeholders before, during and after a crisis.

2.1.4 Conceptualization of Crisis Communication

Crisis communication is the communication between the entity and its publics before, during and after a traumatic event (Fearn-Banks, 1996:2). Indeed, a crisis management program includes fostering a learning mindset around the company, welcoming research and partnering with others (McEntire, 2007). The Crisis Communications Handbook (2012) clarified the form of communication that revolves around the pre-crisis crisis communication activities. This includes the preparation of stakeholders, the gathering and analysis of information for crisis decision-making teams, as well as the development and distribution of crisis messages to outsiders. Effective crisis communication begins before the crisis reaches the company and should be part of every organization's business and strategic strategies (Ulmer, Sellnow, and Seeger, 2007: 35).

2.2 Theoretical Literature Review

Varied theories on crisis communication exist and offer different strategies and steps on how to plan and execute crisis communication. These theories focus on the messages and meaning construction that surround unexpected, crisis events (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013). Nevertheless, crisis communication being a very young academic research discipline originates from Excellence Theory in Public Relations that was generated through a study of best practice in public relations lead by James E. Gruning (1992). This theory is a general

theory of public relations that specifies how public relations makes organizations more effective, how it is organized and managed, when it contributes most to organizational effectiveness, the conditions in organizations and their environments that make organizations more effective, and how the monetary value of public relations can be determined (Gruning, 1992).

(Liu and Fraustino, 2014: pg 543) suggest that existing crisis communication theories can be divided into three categories: the image-making crisis communication theories, resilience generating crisis communication theories, and the complexity-understanding crisis communication theories. These theoretical approaches entail different crisis communication theories that provide different ways of understanding and dealing with crisis.

The dominant theories in the field focus on reputation and image repair. These theories focus on saving an organization's image and protecting its reputation, and thus protecting it from other negative effects of a crisis situation. These image-making theories include the widely used Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). On the other hand, resilience generating crisis theories concentrate on how to move on from a crisis. Discourse of renewal for instance does not focus on image repair, but rather on recovering from a crisis together with the public. Complexity-understanding theories include theories such as the chaos theory and the complexity theory, which emphasize the complicated nature of crises. This research will rely on the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) and the chaos theory as theories in examining the problem to be investigated.

2.2.1 Situational Crisis Communication Theory

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT, 2007) by W. Timothy Coombs is a crisis management theory. It implies that crisis managers should adapt to the degree of crisis risk

and reputational danger presented by the crisis. Evaluating the nature of crisis, the context of the crisis and the credibility of the previous relationship will help crisis managers assess the extent of the organization's reputational danger and how they can view the crisis and assign crisis liability to the public. Thus, SCCT can be extended to the management of a crisis in an organization.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) focuses on maintaining and rebuilding the reputation of an organization that has faced a crisis, and how the public perceives the organization and its handling of a crisis situation (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013). The SCCT is a systematic method for evaluating the reputational threat of a crisis and selecting crisis response and post-crisis response strategies designed to maximize the reputational protection of the response (Coombs, 2009, p. 171). The theory was developed from attribution theory in its methodology and suggests that publics perceive crisis situations along with initial crisis responsibility, crisis history, and prior relational reputation (Coombs, 2009). The theory posited that, stakeholders assess crisis by two factors: crisis history, which refers to whether an organization has experienced a similar crisis before, and prior relational reputation, which is how stakeholders have perceived the organization in other cases. Coombs (1995) further explained that stakeholders assess the reputation threat using two steps. First, they evaluate the initial crisis responsibility followed by the crisis type and, second, they evaluate the crisis history and prior relationship reputation of the organization.

The idea is that actors assign blame for the crisis and, thus, how it is framed. This concept is closely related to the root of the crisis, which relates to whether the crisis arose from an internal organizational problem or from an external source. The various forms of crisis origin have an effect on the distribution of responsibility and therefore on the available crisis management techniques to deploy (Jin et al, 2011). The level of liability assigned to the organization is critically significant, because it will decide its position in the crisis. The

participant in the crisis is another aspect. Depending on whether the central agent is human or natural, the internal or external, person or group crisis may be predicted to evolve in certain ways, and communication strategies may be established accordingly (Jin et al, 2011; Coombs et al, 2010; Cho & Gower, 2006). Research also indicates that the more burden the company bears during the crisis, the greater the reputational danger it would be faced with (Cho & Gower 2006; Coombs 2007).

The Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) thus describes the coping techniques that the telecommunication companies in Ghana should use to resolve a crisis they are faced with during their work and also describes how stakeholders perceive them before, during and after a crisis. As the theory focuses on who was responsible for causing the crisis, as well as on the severity of the danger to the credibility of the company. This will give the telecommunication companies a heads up on where the problem is coming from and how it affects their business or the level of damage it causes their brands hence the deployment of solutions that best fits the problem since we now know the root cause.

SCCT provides the roadmap or a blueprint to crisis management for the telecommunication industry, it does not only focus on the organization's perception of the situation, but also on their pre-conceived notion of how stakeholders respond and perceive organizations.

2.2.2 Chaos theory

Chaos Theory introduced by Edward Lorenz during his attempt to predict the weather in 1960, though more often used in the math's and science setting studies the behavior of dynamic systems that are highly sensitive to initial conditions. This effect is frequently referred to as the butterfly effect. The theory holds that, minute differences in preliminary conditions produce widely divergent outcomes for chaotic systems, making long-term predictions generally impossible. This occurs even though these systems are deterministic,

which means that their future action is entirely dictated by their initial conditions, with no random elements involved.

The chaos theory provides a view on how complex systems, such as organizations, behave and how crises affect them. The theory emphasizes the unpredictability and nonlinearity of complex organizations as well as their dynamic nature. Sensitive dependence on initial conditions, also known as the butterfly effect, an essential part of the chaos theory. This denotes a situation when a small change or nuances can heavily affect a system. This to say that, the outcome of a crisis is strongly hooked on its preliminary conditions. The chaos theory proposes that accurate predictions on the outcome of a crisis is highly unlikely, if not impossible, due to their chaotic and dynamic nature, (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013).

According to the chaos theory, organizations that are complex, non-linear and dependent on other systems, or organizations, are more vulnerable to crises. These kinds of complex organizations, which are common in today's societies, are more prone to experience uncertainty. Communication is seen to have two functions in the chaos theory. First, communication may function as a variant that causes larger changes in a system, and in some cases those changes can even lead to a crisis. Changes in communication process may also worsen the crisis outcome. Secondly, communication may function as a tool for self-organization as well as a tool for organizational renewal. Communication can also help in reorganizing and restructuring as well as creating new image and reputation.

This theory will be a needful in dealing with crisis situations in the telecommunication industry as it also hinges on unpredictability. In a nutshell, the theory will help organizations identify minute and the small changes that can cause major cracks in their organizations so they be better placed to deal with the initial conditions that can drastically change the long-term behavior of both their internal and external stakeholders towards the firm. Such initial

conditions might be considered experimental noise, background noise, or an inaccuracy of the equipment, a disaster among others.

2.2.1 Types of Crisis

The likelihood of crisis hitting an organization is on the increase with the rapid development of media related technologies. The occurrence has plunged researchers into trying to categorize various dimensions of crises. Seeger in (2006) grouped crisis into three blocks as: natural disasters (e.g., tsunamis, earthquakes, and wild fires), industrial accidents (e.g., spills, explosions, and product defects), and intentional events (e.g., workplace violence, product tampering, and terrorist attacks). Crisis can be grouped into types such as: natural disasters, malevolence, technical breakdowns, human breakdowns, challenges, mega damage, organizational misdeeds, workplace violence, and rumors among others, Coombs (1999).

Additionally, Coombs, (2015a) further categorized and distinguishes crisis into disasters and organizational crisis. According to him, disasters are big or small unforeseen occurrences that causes commotion and require the participation of several governmental agents and groups to salvage the situation. Coombs stresses that disasters can also cause organizational crises while in some cases organizational crises can lead to disasters. Organizational crises just as any other form of crises are unpredictable and they can have the tendency to affect the image and performance of an organization negative negatively. Coombs, (2015a) contends that a crisis is the perception of an unpredictable event and highlights that crisis is perceptual situation. Coombs further fleshed up his assertion by saying a crisis exists in organizations if only stakeholders believe the organization is in crisis. As stated earlier, crises are unpredictable and sudden events that hit individuals and organizations yet we can expect and prepare for them in waiting without knowing when it will strike and from where.

In an attempt to broaden the types of crisis in relations to organizations, Coombs, (2015a) argued that there are two broad types of organizational crises: traditional crises and social

media crises which captures the use of new media. According to him, traditional crises interrupt operations of organizations and may cause harm to its stakeholders as well as threaten the safety and welfare of the public, whereas social media crises cause either reparable or irreparable damage to an organization's reputation. Nonetheless, traditional crisis also has the tendency to affect an organization's reputation while social media crises affect public safety. Social media crises are sometimes referred to as Para crises, meaning these types are not crises yet they have the opportunity to become one if poorly managed. (Coombs, 2015a)

Pauchant and Mitroff (1992) also divided crises into technical, economic, human, and social crises. In addition, using situational crisis communication theory (SCCT), Coombs, (2009) categorized crises as victim crises (minimal responsibility), natural disasters, rumors, workplace violence, product tampering/malevolence, accident crises (low responsibility), challenges, technical-error accidents, technical-error product harm, preventable crises (strong responsibility), human-error accidents, human-error product harm, and organizational misdeeds.

This study will focus on the definition as provided by Coombs, (2009) because the categorization was done using situational crisis communication theory (SCCT). A theory which is relevant to our study.

2.2.2 Crisis Management and Stages

Inferring from the above types of crises, its palpable that an understanding of the type of crisis faced by an individual or organization can lead to the formation of a crisis communication plan that will enable proper management of the crisis situation. Due to the heightened exposure of organizations to natural and human catastrophes, crisis management is an expanding area of interest. It is one of the dominant areas in public

relations research and a crucial organizational function. Crisis management is a tool designed to fight crisis, minimize the inflicted damage and protect the organization, stakeholders and industry from harm. Crisis management processes include preventative measures, crisis management plans, and post-crisis evaluations (Coombs, 2010a; Combs, 2007b). Further, Coombs (2010) noted that the preventative measures, crisis management plans, and post-crisis evaluations are essential aspects of crisis management people faced with crisis must adopt. They are then split into pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis stages.

Some scholars also hold the view that crisis management can be perceived as an interdisciplinary practice that uses theory and practices based on psychology and sociology for example. It's obvious, crisis management does not only kick in after the crisis has occurred but also a management system that is concerned with strategizing on how to manage and act if a crisis should occur and how to move on from a crisis (Lockwood, 2005; Seeger & Sellnow, 2013).

Coombs, (2015a) outlined prevention, preparation, response and revision as his four symbiotic elements of crisis management. Prevention refers to protective actions that aims to prevent the crisis from occurring. This means the picking up of signals of eminent crisis and taking appropriate actions to prevent them from growing into a full-fledged crisis. Preparation in crisis management comprises readying the organization and taking actions like making a crisis management plan, preparing documents and policies, creating a robust crisis communication structure as well as selecting a designated executive to speak for and on behalf of the organization. Unlike the first two elements which are internal, response is public. It's an element of crisis management that the public sees or experiences hence, it's a crucial aspect of the crisis communication management. Response is the end result of prevention and preparation and its aimed at minimizing the damage a crisis situation can pose. Recovery is an element of response as its concerned with restoring back to normalcy an

organization after a crisis situation. Just as any system, a crisis management plan needs to be revised. Revision is the final aspect and is essential to evaluating the effectiveness of what has been done. All the key actions taken during the crisis management process forms a part of the components of evaluation, from prevention to response and recovery. Reviewing what has been done can lead organizations to learn and apply crisis management best in the future (Coombs, 2015a).

Many hypotheses have been developed to understand crisis. This led to some enlisted strategies that separate crises into phases, there are now widely-recognized and widely-used crisis management techniques. These strategies help crisis managers to assess and prepare their crisis management needs in advance (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013). For the purpose of this study, we use Coombs' three-stage model. Coombs, (2007a) describes three phases of crisis management. The first stage is considered the pre-crisis stage, the second stage is the crisis response stage and the third stage is the post-crisis stage. This three-stage crisis model is commonly used for crisis analysis as well as for crisis management (Seeger & Seeger, Sellnow, 2013).

The pre-crisis stage focuses on the management of a crisis situation. This better known as the stage where a crisis is avoided from arising, known and perceived risks are identified and attempts are made to reduce those risks. A crisis management plan is being put together during this phase and a crisis management team is being set up. In addition, the preparation of spokespersons is done and pre-draft communications are prepared. The purpose of the Crisis Management Plan is to provide a set of instructions and a references point as to what needs to be done in a crisis situation. For example, it can contain the required forms or contact information, who speaks to what among others. The Crisis Management team is made up of members from various unites of the business and sectors. The crisis management plan then determines the roles assigned to this team members. Coombs, (2007a) points out that both the

Crisis Management Strategy and the Crisis Management team should be routinely checked and reviewed so that they can function effectively in a time of crisis. The pre-crisis stage also involves instruction for members of the company about how to communicate with the media. Spokesperson training is much required in order for the members of the company to be able to address the relevant question without escalating the situation. The stage also encompasses the pre-drafting of messages or templating as well as the choosing of appropriate communication channels to use, depending on the nature of the crisis.

Crisis response is the second stage of crisis management, which includes initial response and reputation repair and behavioral intent. The focus of this stage is on the actions taken when an organization is faced with a crisis, and this action includes the involvement of a strong public relations activity. In response to a crisis, we are advised to be quick, accurate and consistent throughout the process (Coombs, 2007a). It's imperative we communicate quickly during crisis so, to avoid the media and others filling the void. Also, responding quickly creates in the minds of people an image of control, responsiveness, trustworthiness and responsibility. Accuracy and consistency at the initial crisis response phase go parallel. When an incorrect or unverified information is given, it needs to be corrected later and that can create an image of incompetence and inconsistency. During a crisis, it's probable that not only one person will speak to the issues, hence the need to train and ready spokespersons. An additional crucial thing to be considered in the initial guidelines in response to crisis concerns addressing the victims, (Coombs, 2007a). The victims in the scenario are the affected parties, they may include employees and their families, the public, consumers among others. This may help protect the reputation of the organization. Offering counseling and support to the victims and their families is also part of crisis management during incidents where the injuries are serious or even deadly. Usually, crisis always affects an organization's reputation,

and thus reputation repair and the strategies to do that are important for crisis management. In some instances, reputation repair can be part of both crisis response and the post-crisis stage, however, in some cases it might not be needed if crisis response has been conducted successfully.

The post-crisis stage, which is the third stage within the model is where the crisis is over or is almost over, also, reputation repair maybe part of this phase or not. The post-crisis stage usually involves communication with the media, employees or customers. How to keep those involved up-to-date about what is being done to recover from the crisis will depend on the type of the crisis and the type of the organization, as well as the crisis management plan and strategy. Usually the post-crisis stage involves communication with the media, employees or clients. It hinges on how to keep those involved informed up-to - date on what the organization is doing to recover from the crisis. What is done on the road to recovery depends on the organizations plan and strategy for crisis management, the type of crisis and the type of organization, (Coombs, 2007a). According to (Coombs, 2007a) the post-crisis stage is also important for the organization itself as well as for the theory of crisis management. It is important for the crisis manager and the crisis management team to review how the crisis was handled, what was done right and what could be improved.

2.2.3 Relationship between crisis management and crisis communication

Notwithstanding how crisis communication has been used as a responsive tool, for the purposes of this research we have also discovered literature that suggest that crisis communication should exist, before, during and after a crisis which encompasses the whole crisis management process (proactive, responsive and post- crisis evaluation) Therefore, crisis communication ought to be applied during all the crisis management phases. It is

therefore reasoned that there is a *give-and-take* relationship between crisis management and crisis communication.

2.3 Empirical Literature Review

An empirical literature review is more commonly called a systematic literature review and it examines past empirical studies to answer a particular research question. The following empirical studies were reviewed and categorized into themes that reflect research objectives;

2.3.1 Crisis communication methods/strategies used by organizations

Researchers, Kiambi and Shafer (2016) used a 2 to 3 inter-subject method to test two variables in crisis communication and reputation management good and poor corporate credibility and crisis response methods (apology, compassion and compensation) on an organization facing high crisis liability. The results from the study have it that, stakeholders of organizations prefer rendering apologies as to compensation strategies during crisis. Furthermore, results indicate that previously respectable companies have a better post-crisis rating than those with a recent poor image. Crisis managers facing crises that produce high crisis response and anger attribution are advised to focus on apology rather than compensation strategies. An organization with a prior good reputation will also benefit from highlighting its past accomplishments when faced with a crisis situation.

A study on Crisis Communication: A case study of the Integrated Master Plan Crisis in Oromia regional state by Gebeyehu (2018) aimed to find out the crisis communication strategies of the Oromia state government. The study employed theories of crisis management and crisis communication in identifying best practices for leadership to adopt in analyzing the effectiveness of government's response to the crisis due to the new integrated

master plan, a master plan for Addis Ababa city and towns on the outskirts of the city. To attain the results, a content analysis of 58 articles from five newspapers was conducted to examine how government responded to the crisis. Outcomes revealed that government's response incorporated both best practices of crisis communication, as well as crisis responses that could be categorized as unethical. Such unethical responses included evasion of responsibility, attack of the accuser, minimization, and denial, while effective crisis communication tactics consisted of updating the public in a clear and concise manner, acknowledgment of mistake, and expressing sympathy and concern.

Boudreaux (2005) conducted a study to explore the multi-stage model of crisis management: utilities, hurricanes, and contingency. The aim of this study was to explore the three-stage crisis management model and decide what impact the strongly supported-predisposing and situational variables on crisis management have on the contingency theory of accommodation. This qualitative research explores the crisis management practices of Florida state-owned utility companies. Participants addressed the crisis management strategies of their company in connection with the highly active hurricane season of 2004. An updated Delphi analysis was used to gather data from senior public relations practitioners and corporate communications practitioners from a cross section of state municipal utility companies. In order to identify the variables that most affected organizational crisis management, primary and secondary questions were created which referenced each stage of the three-stage crisis management model. The results reveal a connection between the contingency theory's strongly supported-predisposing and situational variables and the three-stage crisis management model.

Additionally, a study on secondary crisis communication strategies on social media conducted by Gongbing, Zheng, Liu and Anhui in China utilized a survey research approach and deployed online questioners. The researchers aimed to increase understanding of the

relationships between corporate crisis response, customer secondary crisis and customer purchase intention. To attain, that based on an economic view, the study proposed a model to examine how corporate crisis response affects customer secondary crisis communication and finally influence purchase intention in social media context. In addition to the direct results, the analysis explored the moderating role of social influence in the above-mentioned ties based on the theory of social influence. Empirical results show that corporate crisis response could decrease customer secondary crisis contact, thereby reducing the negative impact in the social media context on consumer purchasing intention. The findings further confirm the moderating role of customers' perceived social influence in the above relationships.

With respect to the strategy of organizations feeding employees with information to communicate positively to boost their company's reputation during crisis. Mazzei (2014) conducted a qualitative analysis of the managers, academics and experts in internal communication from Italian and American companies. The study explored the effects of internal communication strategies on employee communication behavior (managerial processes, techniques, skills and abilities) and how such internal communication strategies could be built on. Two hypotheses were used to research the reliability of the employee-manager relationships. The study indicated that internal communication techniques help make employees effective communicators. Secondly; through exploration, interpretation, sharing and acting, their communicative actions can be realized and harnessed. To be success at this, the managers in charge of communication must create a conducive environment where employees can easily express themselves.

Correspondingly, Ampofo-Bekoe (2014) interviewed employees from various departments in Tullow Oil Ghana and used the theory of media richness to discover the interaction methods and networks used in the company to achieve successful internal communication. Another aim of the study was to recognize the effect of internal communication on the effectiveness of

the organization as a whole. Results were that workers were pleased with the internal communication approach of the company and opted for the face-to - face platform over all the other internal communication channels their company used. Employees claimed it was more effective to have face-to - face conversations because it gave them an appreciation of the brand image that helped them project the business externally. Employees acknowledged, however, that the face-to - face channels are time consuming too while the study also discovered one big challenge of the communication channels as the frequent breakdowns of the internet server.

2.3.2 Effectiveness of crisis communication strategies

Abdullah and Antony (2012) surveyed Malaysia's top 5-star hotel employees. The study's primary objective was to analyze the effectiveness of internal communication activities of the hotel during crisis and to determine how the components of internal communication such as structure, flow, material, environment and culture were effectively implemented by the hotel. The system theory was used, along with a model of employee relations. Findings demonstrated that effective internal communication is an initiating attempt during and before crisis to achieve organizational success and a way to achieve organizational goals. It also stipulated that the company had a high-performance strategic organizational communication framework where there was clear information flow between managerial and non-managerial employees; employees were aware about the organization's events and occurrences. It ended up stating that employees were pleased with the communication mechanisms (i.e., approach to bottom-up, top-down and horizontal communication) used in the by the organization and hence they will be better placed to defend their organization during crisis.

An additional study by Kukule (2012) was a case study (survey and in-depth interview methods) that explored how inefficiency in communication can lead to organizational crisis. Qualitatively, eight workers (from an undisclosed company) were intentionally sampled and

interviewed at three separate levels of the organization. Supporting Abdullah and Antony's (2012) research, which found that successful internal communication contributes to a functioning organization; Kukule 's study found that internal communication crisis has a direct connection with organizational crisis. Employees also claimed that the internal communication problem of the company came about as a result of erratic or asymmetrical internal structured interaction, weak leadership, lack of principles, fragile corporate culture and complex grapevine.

In a study conducted by T.M. Hocke-Mirzashvili, S. Kelly and P. MacDonald (Winter 2015) using open-ended, structured interviews. Twenty-five students appraised a threat from gunmen on campus. Themes showed that the response to crisis communication at the university was favorably measured by students who first received word from a university-affiliated source. Students who received messages from sources outside the university, and were usually on campus, judged the response negatively. Social media played a large role as information source, increasing the number of voices in the crisis. The paper concludes by integrating the findings into CERC and other crisis models, supports the importance of stakeholder emotions during crisis, and discusses the threat as a form of para-crisis.

2.3.3 Crisis communication as a part of management's overall strategy and organizational policy on crisis communication

Boz and Küçükaltan (2013) used a case-study approach to qualitatively study six major companies from various sectors in Turkey. The purpose of the study was to evaluate and compare the organizations' crisis preparedness mechanism, crisis experiences and characteristics. Findings show that when organizations have disaster preparedness plans, they 're more prepared. Furthermore, organizations that had encountered a crisis before had stronger disaster preparedness programs as their preparedness was not based on the size of the workers' population. Secondly, organizations that were able to recognize possible crisis

risks to their company during their phases of crisis preparedness allowed them to better plan for future crises. This confirms Kovoov et al's assertion (2000:44) that, by proactively identifying the causes of possible crises, implementing protective alert system and continuously learning from the experiences, the organization can solve or avoid crises.

Fowler, Kling, and Larson (2006), on the other hand, performed a comprehensive analysis of organizational readiness to cope with major disaster. The research was to determine organizations' readiness to effectively withstand a significant possible crisis or catastrophe at their workplace in South-West United States. One research result was that top and middle level managers had a higher sense of preparedness relative to their workers. Furthermore, businesses with an enormous workforce over 500 were best prepared for crisis. This research considered attitudes of all levels of workers within the organizations and not only that of just top-level management because, the consequences are that top-level management is likely to have prejudice knowledge in favor of their organization as discovered in a study conducted by Lando (2014) on the crucial roles of crisis communication plan in the preparedness and management of crises of companies.

Selart, Johansen, and Nesse (2012) also studied how crisis management strategies regulate the response of employees to risk and welfare situations. The expectation was that training for leadership crisis would result in lower perceived risk among employees, and would also result in a higher degree of well-being. A survey on the health and safety of both managers and workers from five organizations: two private and three public was conducted. Study results confirmed the hypotheses tested; it was found that the understanding of danger at work by workers was highly dependent upon their knowledge of the preparedness of the organizations for crisis situations. Most notably, the study found that crisis preparedness contributed to well-developed planes for crisis communication and prevention. Moreover,

crisis preparedness has an impact that goes beyond the purpose of avoiding or handling crisis; it has resulted in better employee conduct, overall well-being and a more positive effect on perception of risk.

In an Erica, Fry, Gibson, Chambers, and Todd (2013) study using the 2009 Salmonella outbreak in peanut products in the United States. The study aimed at examining crisis communication strategies put in place to identify which ones were successful and which ones failed and why. Using a case study methodology, public relations practitioners working in the industry were interviewed in relation to the objectives of the research. Outcomes has it that a crisis communications plan is crucial for any organization. Notwithstanding, crisis are unique and plans must be modified and adopted to suite crisis situations. Plans should include a crisis management team, a list of target groups to be approached, and main messages at least. Additionally, media preparation for future spokespeople should be undertaken, and relationships should be established with media representatives before a crisis occurs. Data and literature review have helped the researchers to establish a pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis model for agricultural communication.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the research procedure used for the study. The chapter begins with a discussion on why the researcher adopts a qualitative approach and the exploratory research design as well as their appropriateness for the study. In the end, the chapter further discusses the population sample for the study and the main tools for data collection: observation, interviews and focus group discussions.

3.1 Research Approach

This study adopted a qualitative approach to social science research. The approach made it possible for the study to achieve its underlying objective of an evaluation of crisis communication practices in the Ghanaian telecommunication industry. As noted by Creswell (2015), a qualitative approach is suitable for studies that seek understanding. This approach was therefore relevant because it made it possible for the researcher to understand the issues surrounding crisis communication practices in the telecommunication industry of Ghana. Wimmer and Dominick (2011) define qualitative techniques as an array of interpretive techniques that seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of the certain more or less naturally occurring phenomenon in the social world. Qualitative research allows researchers to understand human phenomena and is useful in investigations of interpretations and meanings that respondents give to events they have experienced. It, therefore, helped in gaining in-depth knowledge and understanding of the topic being studied.

3.2 Research Design

For qualitative studies, several designs can be used. These include case studies, explorative design, and phenomenology (Neuman, 2011). The choice of a particular design, however, depends on a study's objectives and associated research questions. This study used the explorative research design, which best suited the objective of seeking to evaluate the crisis communication practices in the Ghanaian telecommunication industry. Creswell (2014) observes that explorative research design is concerned with issues that required an intensive examination of the setting. Considering the nature and importance of crisis communication and to better expunge the best practices and failure points, the explorative research design was appropriate. The research was exploratory because it led to the discovery of new knowledge and allow for the free flow of information, providing room for further inquiry into

the effectiveness of crisis communication in the Ghanaian Telco industry. Furthermore, the exploratory design can be said to be a research design that helps to satisfy the curiosity of the researcher and desire for proper understanding, and it also helps to test for the possibility of embarking on a more extensive study as well as assisting in developing a method to be used in any subsequent study (Yin, 2013).

3.3 Target Population

Population in research refers to the total collection of individuals or objects about whom a researcher intends to make specific conclusions (Neuman, 2011). It refers to the group, usually with certain common characteristics, about which a researcher would like the results of a study to be generalized or related to. For this study, the target population includes employees of some selected telecommunication companies in Ghana. The study specifically focuses on public relations persons or communicators who are staff of MTN Ghana, Vodafone Ghana and AirtelTigo as the study aims to evaluate the practices of crisis communication in the Ghanaian telecommunication industry. Researcher chose the above-mentioned telecommunication companies because MTN Ghana is leading the market with 57% subscribers while Vodafone has 21.97% and AirtelTigo who had to merge due to underperforms still lags behind with 20.3% of the total market share. One will ask why Glo with 1.75% or defunct Espresso are not a part of the researchers target population. This is because the researcher seeks to identify what is being done right by the market leader in terms of crisis communication that keeps it ahead, what the market followers are doing well to keep them running and controlling 21.97% and 20.3% respectively.

(Techpoint.africa.com). Defunct Espresso did not fall under the researcher's category because it's no more in existence while Glo did not make the mark because they are new

entrants into the Ghanaian telco space and have not experienced major crisis as compared to MTN, Vodafone and AirtelTigo.

3.4 Sample Size

The sample size used in qualitative research methods is often smaller than that used in quantitative research methods. This is because qualitative research methods are often concerned with garnering an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon or are focused on meaning and heterogeneities in meaning which is often centered on the how and why of a particular issue, process, situation, subculture, scene or set of social interactions. The researcher will use his judgment in selecting nine (9) respondents, three from each of the telecommunication companies being considered for this research.

3.5 Sampling technique

The number of participants in a sample depends on the questions being asked, the data being gathered, and the analysis and resources available to support the study (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2013). Non-probability approaches such as purposive, convenience, snowball and quota sampling are mostly used for in-depth qualitative research in which the focal point is to understand a complex social phenomenon (Marshall et al., 2020). Although there are many sampling methods, purposeful sampling was chosen. Purposive sampling is a sampling method that involves selecting subjects with the required characteristics, being those that the researcher can get the most relevant information from (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Thus, in gaining field data from the respondents, a purposive sampling technique was adopted.

The respondents who are chosen from the corporate affairs, public relations and communications departments of the above-mentioned telecommunication companies were

purposively selected because specific data and information were needed by the researcher from the said group to help answer the research questions. They were therefore positioned to provide the specialized information needful for the effective conduct of the study. The technique is used to select suitable officials best placed to answer the research questions; thus those who were deemed crucial to have the information needed (Abrams, 2010; Palys, 2008). To seek understanding, respondents were purposively selected. The respondents were purposively selected because the information on the subject matter is specific and therefore an expert with the requisite experience is required to achieve data that is reliable. Neuman (2011) suggests that the purposive sampling method is used where the researcher wishes to select particularly informative cases, and when working with very small samples. Purposive sampling was chosen because the relevant data needed can only be obtained from specific persons directly related to the subject matter. Thus, this technique was necessary for selecting a handy sampling size.

3.6 Sources of data

The researcher adopted primary sources of data for the study. The primary source of data is the information, which is collected by a researcher himself/herself through the use of a questionnaire or interview guide (Leedy & Omrod, 2005). Data that is originally gathered for research is known as primary data. This type of data is gathered by field workers making it authentic. Primary data offers the finest basis of information. It enjoys a high level of accuracy since data obtained is coming from the population under study. The semi-structured interview guide will be used to gather data on crisis communication practices in the Telecommunication industry.

3.7 Research instrument

Data, according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006), is referred to as the empirical evidence that a researcher carefully assemble based on specific procedures or rules. The collection of data, however, is needed by researcher to address research problems. Tools are the instruments that will be used by the researcher to collect information from the target population to address the stated research problem. The instrument that will be used for the collection of data for this study is the interview guide which will be verbally administered in English. The researcher will use the semi-structured interview guide to elicit relevant data from public relations persons or communicators who are staff of MTN Ghana, Vodafone Ghana and AirtelTigo. These respondents will be interviewed in their various offices at their own convenient time to obtain the relevant data needed that can only be obtained from specific persons directly related to the subject matter. According to Yin (2014), the semi-structured interview makes use of an interview guide in a form of series of questions that are in the form of an interview schedule but the interviewer can vary the sequence of questions and also probe further to elicit relevant information.

Requests for interview appointments will be sought and obtained from target respondents through oral communication indicating the purpose, nature, content, and duration of interviews as well as an assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. The target respondents will also be made aware of the researcher's intention to record the interviews and quotes when necessary. Interview guides will be designed for in-depth interviews with all respondents. Probing techniques will also be used to gain further clarification and to induce respondents to expand, explain their answers and focus on the specific content of the interview. All of the interviews for this study will be tape-recorded. Tape-recording is deemed useful to enable the interviewer to keep eye contact with the interviewees, assist accurate note-taking and to check the wording of any statement made that needed to be

quoted during analysis. Creswell (2014) To ensure that the study instrument is valid and reliable, as the quality of research largely depends on the quality of the instruments used and procedures of collecting the data since the two essentials of good research are validity and reliability, the researcher will ensure that the questions designed are based on the following guidelines:

- The questions will be formed in such a way as to make it easy for respondents to understand them.
- The questions will be few as necessary to produce the information required.
- The questions will require answers that are very straight forward and precise.
- The questions will be directly related to the information required.
- The questions will be such that they could be answered honestly and without bias.

3.8 Data analysis

The interviews in this study will be recorded with a digital voice recorder. Also, the researcher will keep a research journal in which other field notes and informal chats are to be written. After data collection, all the audio data will be transcribed into text and subsequently edited to detect and eliminate typographical errors. The researcher will then read the data over and over again to familiarize and to have an idea of what the data contained as recommended by (Kothari & Garg, 2019). The thematic analysis approach will be employed to generate meaning from raw data. This will be done by first identifying important themes and patterns in text data through careful examination and constant comparison. After identifying the themes emerging from the data, they will then be grouped under the main objectives of the study; thus, to make an empirical inquiry into the subject matter. The researcher will then discuss the findings by relating them to the literature reviewed to either

validate or invalidate the major arguments. Specific quotes from respondents cited were relevant to buttress the generated themes.

3.9 Ethical considerations

This study will be concerned with ethical issues considered in the telecommunication industry, therefore certain ethical principles are to be observed to protect the interest of the organization and individual respondents. Before the commencement of interviews, respondents will be assured that the use of information provided was for academic purposes only. To also ensure the anonymity of respondents, they will not be made to disclose their identity. The researcher will also ensure that the information provided is kept in confidence for this study only.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.0 Introduction

This is the concluding chapter of the study and it gives a summary of all that the study is about as well as the recommendations. Based on the outcome of the study, the researcher concluded and made recommendations that will be of benefit to the telecommunication industry in Ghana. Furthermore, the researchers identified the limitations of the study to guide future studies on the subject matter.

4.1 Summary

An incident or occurrence that affects an organization's regular operation and, if badly handled, can kill a good corporate reputation in just a few days, even clear the company off the face of the earth I will term as a crisis situation. Crisis may first appear to be one that cannot trigger the extinguishing of an organization over a period of time can jeopardize its operation and existence hence the need for strategy and planning.

It should be noted that no two crisis situations are alike or similar and that all crisis situations differ and needs different approaches in managing them hence, it's unreasonable to develop a one-fit-all solution for all organizations and the crisis that hit them. The telecommunication industry must be in the known that no organization in this day and time immune to crisis situations. This means they need to create or generate the capacity to stomach and successfully manage crisis situations. In this vain, crisis communication management has become a crucial part of organizations strategy irrespective of how big, small, successful, powerful or respectful an organization is. In today's practice of the corporate governance process, it is impossible to find an organization that has not in any way met a crisis situation

of any kind. Due to the recent happenings, corporate management is also required to participate more in crisis communication and management procedures, accurately because of the more regular and unpredictable nature of different crises.

4.2 Contribution to literature

This study will contribute to a deeper understanding and emphasis on the importance of internal crisis communication preparedness to organizations and open up further scholarly investigation on the subject within Africa (since most studies done have considered the western context). In addition, the findings of this study will help the study organizations to build strong internal strategies for crisis communication management in order to better manage future crises from escalating. Findings of this study will also encourage the study organizations to make crisis information easily accessible to all employees so that they can easily relate it to the organizational culture and perform productively towards their organizational goals. It will also highlight the importance of management-employee crisis communication preparedness before considering the external crisis communication. Organizations in the sector can also apply the recommendations that stem from this study to improve their crisis resiliency.

4.3 Limitations

In undertaking the research, the researcher was confronted with some challenges such as finance, time, and adequate research information as well as access to sample size to collect data due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. The research due to the happenings was limited to only literature available on the topic since primary data was not collected from the

stated sample size due to the pandemic. Researcher suggests others to go on the field and gather data, process it and come up findings based on primary data gathered.

4.4 General Recommendation

The researcher after reviewing literature and reading articles in relations to the topic under study recommends that crisis communication should be planned, well managed and tactfully executed. Also, all organizations are to follow through and use the appropriate strategies that will work or best fit a particular crisis situation as a one-fit-for all or an on the shelve solution may fail due to the unique nature of all crisis situations. Additionally, organizations who are players within the telecommunication space should have crisis communication plans as a part of managements overall strategy and it should trickle from the board level to the least of employees on the hierarchy as the collaboration of all internal stakeholders will help the organization thrive and survive a crisis while disorganization in purpose will hurt the organization.

4.5 Recommendation for further studies

The research was a qualitative study and further studies should look at conducting a mix method to also take into account the feedback on the effectiveness of the strategies from the consumers' point of view. Also, other researches can focus on other sectors of the economy that are deemed crucial to growth and carry out a research to also expunge best strategies in handling and managing crisis going forwards.

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