



**ANALYSIS OF CRISIS PREPAREDNESS IN CORPORATE INSTITUTIONS
IN THE DIGITAL AGE: A STUDY OF TELECEL GHANA**

BY

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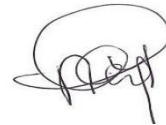
DECEMBER 2025

DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that this research is a result of my own original work and that, no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or any other higher education institute. I further declare that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

This Dissertation has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of Dissertation laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC-IJ).

Dr. Albert Anani-Bossman



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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family and all who supported me both financially and with prayers throughout my study. Especially my parents, guardian, and my supervisor, Dr. Albert Anani-Bossman, who guided, challenged, and inspired me not only for the purpose of this research but throughout my one-year journey.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined crisis preparedness in corporate institutions in the digital age using Telecel Ghana as a qualitative case study. It explored how the company prepares for and manages crises, the digital tools it employs for crisis communication, the challenges encountered, and the effectiveness of strategies used to address misinformation. A qualitative case study design was adopted, drawing on semi structured interviews with purposively selected eight (8) staff in Telecel Ghana's External Affairs function. The findings show that Telecel Ghana has formal crisis management structures, documented plans and cross functional teams that support a relatively high level of preparedness, including clear escalation procedures and regular internal coordination. The study also found that social listening tools, official social media channels, the corporate website, news media relations and the call centre are central to digital crisis communication, although these mechanisms are sometimes stretched by limited personnel, tool integration gaps and the rapid spread of misinformation. Overall, the study concludes that Telecel Ghana has a strong foundation for digital crisis management but would benefit from deeper investment in analytics capabilities, continuous staff training, structured simulations and closer collaboration with regulators to enhance future crisis resilience.

Keyword: Crisis, Crisis Preparedness, Telecommunications, Digital Age, Artificial Intelligence.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
IRB	Institutional Review Board
MTN	Mobile Telecommunications Network
PR	Public Relations
SCCT	Situational Crisis Communication Theory
SMEs	Small and Medium sized Enterprises
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter provides the foundational framework for the entire study, outlining its scope and objectives. It begins by setting the stage for a detailed examination of digital crisis preparedness and communication within the Ghanaian telecommunications sector, with a specific focus on Telecel Ghana. This study addresses a critical research gap by providing context-specific insights into how a major telecommunications firm navigates the complexities of digital crises and contributes to both academic knowledge and practical applications for industry practitioners in Ghana and across the African continent.

1.1 Background of the Study

The digital revolution has fundamentally transformed organisational crisis management, introducing both unprecedented opportunities and formidable challenges. In today's hyper-connected global environment, crises emerge more frequently, escalate more rapidly, and carry far-reaching consequences for organisational stability and reputation (Merter et al., 2025). Digital technologies have redefined business operations, stakeholder interactions, and crisis detection mechanisms, creating a paradoxical dynamic. While digital tools enhance communication and responsiveness, they also amplify reputational risks and operational vulnerabilities (Coombs, 2014).

Modern crises stem from diverse sources, ranging from natural disasters and technological failures to human error and deliberate reputational attacks, each

demanding swift, strategic responses to mitigate escalation (Ulmer et al., 2019). Unlike traditional crises, which unfolded over days or weeks, digital-era crises can erupt within minutes, fueled by social media's instantaneous dissemination of information (Sheehan & Quinn-Allan, 2015). The "viral effect" means that minor missteps can spiral into full-blown reputational disasters before organizations have time to react, necessitating real-time monitoring and adaptive response strategies (Doorley & Garcia, 2025).

Moreover, the democratization of information through citizen journalism and digital activism has shifted power dynamics, enabling stakeholders to demand transparency and accountability outside traditional media channels (Saleh, 2016). This decentralization of communication complicates crisis management, as organizations no longer control the narrative and must engage in continuous, multi-platform dialogue with diverse audiences.

While digital transformation has been a global phenomenon, its impact varies significantly across regions due to differing technological adoption rates, cultural norms, and regulatory environments. In Ghana, the rapid expansion of digital connectivity particularly through mobile technology, has created unique challenges for crisis management. Western-derived crisis communication models often fail to account for local communication behaviors, stakeholder expectations, and media landscapes, leading to ineffective responses (Frandsen & Johansen, 2017).

The telecommunications sector, as the backbone of digital infrastructure, is especially vulnerable. Telecom providers like Telecel Ghana operate in a high-stakes environment where service disruptions, whether technical or reputational, can trigger immediate public backlash on social media. Given Ghana's growing social media

penetration, crises in this sector require not only rapid technical resolution but also culturally sensitive communication strategies to maintain trust and credibility.

Public relations (PR) professionals must now integrate classical crisis management frameworks with advanced digital tools such as social listening, predictive analytics, and artificial intelligence (AI) (Kundratitz & Hagendorn, 2025). Grunig and Hunt's (1984) two-way symmetrical communication model, once the gold standard for ethical PR, must be reinterpreted in an era where stakeholders co-create narratives in real time.

AI, in particular, presents both opportunities and risks in crisis management. On one hand, AI-driven sentiment analysis and real-time data processing can enhance situational awareness, enabling faster, more informed decision-making (Kundratitz & Hagendorn, 2025). On the other hand, AI can exacerbate crises through deepfakes, algorithmic biases, and misinformation, requiring organizations to balance technological adoption with ethical considerations.

Contemporary scholarship reframes crises not merely as threats but as catalysts for organisational learning and transformation (Ulmer et al., 2019). Effective crisis management in the digital age requires agility, transparency, and a commitment to stakeholder engagement. Companies that leverage crises as opportunities to strengthen trust, refine processes, and enhance digital resilience gain a competitive advantage in volatile markets.

A compelling example of this is the recurrent digital crises experienced by telecommunication companies in Ghana. For instance, recent events involving MTN Ghana highlight how issues like mobile money fraud and misinformation campaigns can negatively impact public perception, exposing a perceived lack of preparedness for digital crises. While your study focuses on Telecel, the challenges faced by

companies like MTN serve as a crucial backdrop, illustrating the systemic vulnerabilities within Ghana's telecom sector that necessitate further research.

Telecel Ghana, like many telecom companies, is not just about calls; mobile money has become a significant part of its operations and a target for fraud and misinformation. These incidents have a negative impact on financial transactions and daily communication, adding a layer of complexity that elevates the potential impact of a crisis beyond just communication disruption to include economic disruption.

The challenges in digital crisis management, particularly within the Ghanaian telecommunications sector, underscore a significant gap in the application of modern crisis communication frameworks. Despite the rapid growth of digital services and the high stakes involved, there is a clear need to investigate how companies like Telecel Ghana can effectively navigate and mitigate crises in a unique socio-cultural and digital landscape. The inability of traditional models to address these issues and the growing prevalence of digital-era threats point to a critical gap that this study aims to address, leading directly into the problem statement.

1.2 Problem Statement

The digital revolution has created a significant disjuncture between the theoretical frameworks of crisis management and their practical application within corporate institutions, especially in Ghana's rapidly expanding telecommunications sector. This sector is highly susceptible to digital threats like mobile money fraud and misinformation, which carry not only reputational but also substantial economic risks. This study aims to address the critical gaps in current literature.

Despite the recognition that African organizations face unique challenges due to infrastructural limitations and distinct stakeholder expectations (Mensah et al., 2021),

empirical evidence on crisis preparedness in the Ghanaian context remains limited. Existing studies on digital crisis management, such as those exploring AI for crisis forecasting (Balouz, 2025), are often confined to Western corporate environments, leaving a substantial knowledge void regarding their applicability in emerging democracies like Ghana.

Therefore, this study addresses a crucial empirical and contextual gap by investigating how the Ghanaian telecommunications sector, with its unique digital adoption patterns and socio-cultural dynamics, is preparing for and responding to digital crises. Without this understanding, organizations in Ghana risk implementing inadequate crisis strategies that fail to address the unique demands of their digital-age reality, thereby compromising their operational resilience and stakeholder trust. This research is essential to bridging the gap between theory and practice, providing actionable insights for effective crisis management in this specific context.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study seeks to:

1. Analyse the current level of crisis preparedness within Telecel Ghana in the digital age.
2. Examine how Telecel Ghana utilises digital tools for crisis communication and management.
3. Identify key challenges faced by Telecel Ghana in managing digital crises.
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of its strategies in addressing misinformation.

1.4 Research Questions

The study will address the following research questions:

1. What is the current state of crisis preparedness at Telecel Ghana in the digital age?
2. How does Telecel Ghana utilise digital tools in crisis communication and management?
3. What are the primary challenges Telecel Ghana encounters in managing crises?
4. How effective are Telecel Ghana's strategies in mitigating misinformation?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study addresses a significant empirical and contextual gaps in digital crisis management literature, particularly within the Ghanaian telecommunications sector.

By focusing on Telecel Ghana, the study will provide practical, evidence-based insights into the strengths and weaknesses of current digital crisis preparedness strategies. This information is vital for the company to enhance its internal protocols, improve stakeholder engagement, and mitigate reputational and economic risks.

Ultimately, the study aims to offer actionable recommendations that can be used by other telecommunications companies, regulatory bodies, and policymakers in Ghana and similar emerging markets to build more robust and resilient digital crisis response infrastructures.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

This study investigates the digital crisis preparedness and communication strategies of Telecel Ghana, a key player in the Ghanaian telecommunications sector. The research focuses on how the company's formal protocols and informal practices, particularly those involving digital technologies like social media, have adapted to modern crisis management demands. The scope is limited to a single-case study of Telecel Ghana, and the study population is confined to its employees in relevant departments, allowing for an in-depth, contextual analysis.

1.7 Organization of the Study

This study is structured into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the research, outlining the background, problem statement, objectives, questions, significance, and scope. Chapter Two reviews relevant literature and theoretical frameworks on crisis communication and digital media, establishing the study's conceptual foundation. Chapter Three details the methodology, including the case study design, data collection, and analysis techniques. Chapter Four presents and interprets the empirical findings from the research. Finally, Chapter Five summarizes the key findings, discusses their theoretical and practical implications, and provides recommendations for improving digital crisis management in the Ghanaian telecommunications sector.

1.8 Operational Definitions

Crisis Management: The process by which an organization deals with a major event that threatens to harm the organization, its stakeholders, or the general public. The major goal during a crisis is to resolve the situation immediately to sustain business

continuity. In the digital age, this includes managing communication across digital platforms.

Digital Age: The current era characterized by the widespread use of digital technologies, particularly the internet, mobile technologies, and social media, which facilitate the instantaneous creation, exchange, and dissemination of information.

Crisis Preparedness: The state of being ready to effectively manage a crisis before it occurs. This involves anticipating potential problems, developing strategies, training personnel, and establishing systems for recognition, rehearsal, response, and recovery.

Social Media: Digital platforms and websites that enable users to create and share content and participate in social networking. In crisis management, social media is a key source of communication, facilitating rapid information dissemination and real-time engagement.

Data Analytics: The process of examining raw data to find trends and insights. In digital crisis management, this includes monitoring social media activity to identify emerging issues and predict potential crises.

Transparency: The practice of being open, honest, and clear in communication. In digital crisis management, transparency is highlighted as essential for fostering public trust and credibility.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): Computer systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as reasoning, learning, decision-making, and perception.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a theoretical and empirical foundation for the study by reviewing existing literature on crisis communication and preparedness. It begins with a discussion of key theoretical frameworks, followed by an examination of how digital technologies and the context of emerging markets, specifically Ghana, have reshaped these theories. The chapter aims to justify the need for this research and connect the broader academic discourse to the specific case study of Telecel Ghana.

2.1 Theoretical Frameworks

This study is grounded in a theoretical framework that provides a structured lens for analyzing crisis communication and preparedness in a digital context. The following theories were selected for their relevance to understanding organisational behavior, stakeholder expectations, and communication outcomes in both a digital environment and the specific context of Ghana.

2.1.1 Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

Developed by W. Timothy Coombs, the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) is a highly influential framework that links the effectiveness of a crisis response to the perceived level of an organization's responsibility for the crisis event. SCCT classifies crises into three clusters namely victim, accidental, and preventable, and provides a framework for selecting appropriate communication strategies (Coombs, 2007). In the modern digital landscape, the theory has been extended to account for how real-time communication on platforms like social media can

influence public perceptions and require immediate, tailored responses (Utz et al., 2013). Research by Macnamara (2021), for instance, applies SCCT to analyse how an organization facing a financial crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic communicated with its stakeholders.

The application of SCCT is particularly relevant for a telecommunications provider like Telecel Ghana, which must manage crises ranging from network outages (accidental) to data breaches (preventable). The theory provides a robust analytical tool for assessing not only the type of crisis but also the appropriateness of the communication strategy in an environment where digital amplification can rapidly intensify reputational risks (Merter et al., 2025). Furthermore, a study by Akpene Mawusi (2025) on crisis communication in Ghana highlights the importance of effective communication for maintaining stakeholder trust, a core tenet of SCCT in reputation repair.

2.1.2 Chaos Theory

Chaos Theory offers a paradigm shift from traditional, linear crisis management models by viewing crises as nonlinear, unpredictable, and emergent events shaped by numerous interacting variables (Sellnow et al., 2019). This perspective is highly compatible with the dynamics of the digital age, where crises can erupt and spiral through social media in real-time, often without full information (Veil et al., 2011). In this context, rigid, pre-planned responses may fail, emphasizing the need for organisational adaptability and resilience.

For a company like Telecel Ghana, Chaos Theory underscores the importance of decentralized decision-making and empowering frontline communication personnel to act quickly and autonomously. This is especially relevant given the unique socio-

cultural dynamics and digital adoption patterns in Ghana's emerging market (Mensah et al., 2021). The theory provides a rationale for integrating agile systems and continuous learning into the crisis preparedness infrastructure. This aligns with recent research on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in crisis management, which advocates for adaptive, ethical, and human-centered tools to manage unpredictable events and combat the rapid spread of misinformation (Rainer et al., 2024; WHO, 2025).

2.1.3 Relevance of Theories to the Study

These two theories provide a comprehensive and robust framework for this study. While SCCT offers a prescriptive model for responding to crises based on their nature, Chaos Theory provides a descriptive model for understanding the unpredictable and dynamic environment in which these crises unfold. The combination of these frameworks allows for a nuanced analysis of how a company in an emerging market navigates both the predictable and unpredictable aspects of digital crises. By applying these theories to the case of Telecel Ghana, this research will fill a critical gap in the literature, providing actionable insights for improving crisis preparedness in a context where traditional Western-centric models may be less applicable (Balouz, 2025; Mensah et al., 2021).

2.2 Conceptualizing Crisis and Crisis Preparedness

This section establishes a foundational understanding of crises and the concept of preparedness, which are central to this study. It defines a crisis, explores the critical role of preparedness, and examines how both concepts have been profoundly reshaped by the digital age.

2.2.1 Defining Crisis

A crisis is a significant and often sudden disruption that threatens an organization's core operations, reputation, financial stability, and long-term viability (Bundy et al., 2017). These events are characterized by high uncertainty, urgency, and the potential for severe consequences, demanding swift and strategic responses. Crises can originate from internal failures (e.g., leadership scandals, system failures), external shocks (e.g., natural disasters, economic shifts), or a complex combination of both. As Coombs (2021) emphasizes, crises unfold in a high-pressure environment with limited time for decision-making and heightened public and media scrutiny, necessitating transparent and coordinated communication. From a strategic communication perspective, crises threaten an organization's relational equity with key stakeholders, including customers, employees, regulators, and the public. A recent evolution in this field is the emergence of "digitally-amplified crises," which either originate or escalate through online platforms (Veil et al., 2020). These can turn a minor incident into a major reputational crisis due to the viral speed of misinformation and public backlash.

2.2.2 Crisis Preparedness

Crisis preparedness is the proactive development and implementation of strategies, resources, and systems to ensure an effective response to potential disruptions. It is a continuous process that includes risk assessment, scenario planning, crisis simulations, and the establishment of dedicated crisis management teams (Pang et al., 2021; Monternel et al., 2023). According to Augustine (2020), robust pre-crisis planning and responsive communication systems are critical determinants of a positive crisis

outcome, as they help an organization maintain stakeholder trust and minimize reputational damage. This preparedness should be a deeply ingrained part of the organisational culture, regularly tested and updated through drills.

In the digital era, crisis preparedness extends beyond traditional communication skills. It demands new competencies such as digital literacy, real-time monitoring, and data analytics (Liu & Fraustino, 2021). The integration of social listening tools, for example, allows organizations to detect early warning signals and identify potential issues before they escalate (Merter et al., 2025). Within Ghana's context, effective digital preparedness requires understanding the local environment's technological capabilities and constraints, including varying levels of digital adoption, access to reliable internet infrastructure, and cultural norms around communication and trust (Mensah et al., 2021).

2.2.3 Crisis in the Digital Age

The advent of digital technology has fundamentally reshaped the crisis landscape, influencing how crises emerge, how stakeholders engage, and how responses are formulated. The ubiquity of social media, instant messaging, and a 24/7 news cycle has elevated both the speed and complexity of crisis communication. Digital platforms allow for the rapid spread of both accurate information and misinformation, compressing the timeframe for an organisational response (Jiang et al., 2021; WHO, 2025). As a result, organizations are expected to offer timely, transparent, and empathetic responses almost instantaneously or risk losing control of the narrative.

However, these same technologies that create new vulnerabilities also offer new tools for response. Digital platforms can be leveraged for two-way communication, sentiment analysis, stakeholder engagement, and the real-time dissemination of

updates (Koch et al., 2022). In emerging markets like Ghana, the integration of these digital tools into crisis preparedness must account for local challenges and unique adoption patterns. This requires organizations like Telecel Ghana to calibrate their digital crisis strategies for both effectiveness and inclusivity, ensuring that they are contextually relevant to the diverse communication ecosystem and stakeholder expectations (Mensah et al., 2021).

2.3 Empirical Studies

As the world transitions into a new technological era, the Ghanaian landscape is not left behind. The rapid digitization of Ghana's telecommunications sector, coupled with increasing social media penetration and digital activism, has created new crisis vulnerabilities that traditional frameworks may inadequately address. This section synthesizes recent empirical research to highlight how organizations have adapted or failed to adapt to digital disruption, with a focus on studies relevant to corporate institutions in emerging markets like Ghana. While much of the crisis communication literature originates from Western contexts, a growing body of research is now focusing on emerging markets, where the convergence of technological adoption, socio-political complexity, and limited institutional infrastructure creates a unique environment for crisis management.

2.3.1 Studies on Digital Transformation and Crisis Preparedness

Leo et al. (2023) examined the effects of digital transformation on frontline service employees' crisis preparedness beliefs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research, which surveyed 592 employees in the hospitality and retail sectors, found that digital transformation significantly predicted employees' beliefs regarding crisis

preparedness, which in turn enhanced life satisfaction and customer orientation. However, the study's scope was limited to these sectors, which do not fully represent the unique operational challenges and digital crisis preparedness strategies of telecommunications organizations.

Similarly, other empirical studies have focused on sectors with different operational realities. For instance, Klyver and Nielsen (2024) investigated the effects of crisis preparedness on strategic choices made by small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Denmark during the COVID-19 lockdowns. While their research provided valuable insights into financial, organisational, and cultural preparedness, its concentration on SMEs does not reflect the scale or complexity of a large telecommunications provider. Likewise, Zhang and Qi (2021) explored crisis preparedness within healthcare manufacturing firms, but their emphasis on individual employee outcomes rather than organisational resilience and service continuity metrics limited their findings' applicability to other sectors like telecommunications.

2.3.2 Crisis Preparedness and Communication in the African Context

Studies focused on the African continent highlight the unique challenges and opportunities for digital crisis preparedness. According to (Temitope Fagbemi et al., 2024) that despite a growing knowledge on the importance of using digital technologies for organisational resilience, many organizations remain underprepared to use them effectively. Their findings showed that corporate responses were often reactive rather than proactive and this is because of the lack of skilled personnel and the inability to retain staff.

Further reinforcing these findings, Muriithi and Kariuki (2019) revealed that, the telecommunications industry in Kenya, highlighting significant gaps in the strategic use of digital platforms during organisational crises. Their study found that while companies used digital channels like Twitter and SMS for public communication during service outages, these platforms were rarely utilised for two-way communication, stakeholder feedback, or early risk detection. These studies collectively suggest that while digital infrastructure is expanding across many African countries, its application in crisis contexts remains largely underdeveloped, with many firms still in the early stages of transitioning from traditional to integrated digital communication frameworks.

2.3.3 The Role of Digital Tools in Crisis Preparedness

The advent of digital technology has created new tools for crisis management, serving as both a source of vulnerability and a means of response. Austin and Jin (2017) found that organizations with structured digital communication strategies, including predefined content templates, social media playbooks, and real-time monitoring systems, tend to manage public expectations more effectively. Their research emphasized the value of integrating social media into broader crisis frameworks. Similarly, Wang and Hutchins (2020) conducted a multi-sectoral study that revealed a common over-reliance on reactive approaches. They called for the institutionalization of digital crisis protocols, which is particularly relevant to the telecommunications industry, where communication delays can have large-scale public consequences.

This shift has also been explored by Liu et al. (2016), who noted the dual role of social media as both a crisis instigator and a communication tool. They found that while social media can exacerbate crises through the spread of misinformation, it also

allows organizations to engage stakeholders directly and transparently. Eriksson and Olsson (2021) added that authenticity and message tone are as important as speed in the digital sphere, concluding that companies that communicate empathetically and provide regular updates are more successful in retaining public trust. (ECREA-2024) Responsible AI use can advance risk communication and infodemic management in emergencies, new study shows. This suggests that a company like Telecel Ghana must not only leverage speed but also prioritize authenticity and direct engagement to effectively manage its digital narrative.

2.3.4 Sector-Specific Applications in Telecommunications

The telecommunications sector holds a distinct position in crisis communication due to its vital role in enabling connectivity, public discourse, and emergency coordination. A study by Owusu-Ansah and Asante (2022) examined crisis communication within Ghana's telecommunications industry and identified recurring challenges, including inadequate transparency, inconsistent messaging, and a lack of stakeholder engagement. Their analysis of public reactions to service outages found that delayed or vague responses often led to widespread public dissatisfaction. The researchers concluded that firms must prioritize communication clarity and establish protocols for rapid, situation-specific responses.

Furthermore, Dlamini and Nyembe (2023) explored digital crisis strategies among Telecom providers in Southern Africa, emphasizing the importance of contextual factors such as linguistic diversity and infrastructure disparities. Their research showed that companies that localized their crisis communication, by offering multilingual updates and using accessible platforms like SMS and WhatsApp, were better able to maintain public trust. This sector-specific evidence reinforces the need

for telecom firms like Telecel Ghana to develop tailored communication strategies that consider not only technological solutions but also socio-cultural dynamics. The ability to segment stakeholders and communicate through culturally appropriate channels is critical for effective crisis management in this sector.

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a comprehensive examination of the academic discourse surrounding the impact of digital transformation on crisis communication and preparedness. It systematically built a theoretical and empirical foundation for the study.

The chapter began by establishing the conceptual framework, defining a crisis and the critical role of preparedness, particularly in the context of "digitally-amplified crises." This was followed by the theoretical framework, which used a combination of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) and Chaos Theory as a dual lens to analyse how organizations can both strategically respond to and adapt to the unpredictable nature of modern crises. The chapter then delved into a review of existing literature, first discussing the various types of digital tools available for crisis management, such as social media platforms, monitoring software, and mobile communication technologies. It concluded with an empirical review that synthesized the findings of previous studies, highlighting how organizations, particularly in the Ghanaian telecommunications sector, are currently adapting or failing to adapt to digital disruption. This review underscored a significant research gap concerning the localized application of these strategies, which this study aims to address by providing practical, context-specific insights.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the research methodology employed to investigate crisis communication preparedness within the Ghanaian telecommunications sector. It systematically details the research paradigm, design, population, sampling strategy, data collection methods, analytical procedures and captures the structure of the entire study.

3.1 Research Approach and Paradigm

This study adopted a qualitative research methodology, guided by the interpretivist paradigm. This paradigm was well suited for the research because it sought to understand the subjective meanings and interpretations that individuals and organizations assigned to complex social phenomena such as digital crisis management. As noted by Creswell and Poth (2018) and Saunders et al. (2019), a qualitative approach was essential when the goal was to obtain a deep, nuanced understanding of a context dependent process rather than statistical generalization. The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to engage directly with participants and organisational materials to gain rich insights into how digital crisis management was conceptualized, operationalized, and experienced in practice.

3.2 Research Design

The study employed a qualitative case study design. As defined by Yin (2018), this empirical inquiry enabled an in depth, contextual analysis of a bounded system, which in this case was Telecel Ghana. The design was particularly appropriate because the

phenomenon of interest, digital crisis management, was contemporary and closely intertwined with its real life organisational context. A case study served as an effective method for uncovering the interplay between formal policy and informal practice, capturing the voices of organisational actors, and offering a holistic understanding that would have been difficult to achieve through other methods (Silverman, 2020).

The study adopted a single case study because of its exploratory nature and the aim to obtain an in depth understanding of a specific phenomenon within a unique context, namely Telecel Ghana's crisis preparedness in the digital age. This approach provided rich and insightful detail as it revealed the complexities and nuances of digital crisis communication practices in a way that multi case studies could not.

3.3 Research Population

The research population for this study consisted of all employees within the External Affairs department, specifically the Public Relations and Marketing departments at Telecel Ghana, who were directly involved in the organization's crisis communication and management efforts. Although the total workforce of Telecel Ghana numbered in the thousands, the study focused on the specific departments and units responsible for external and internal communication. This targeted population was crucial because these individuals possessed the specialized knowledge and firsthand experience needed to provide meaningful insights into the organization's preparedness and response strategies.

3.4 Sampling Strategy and Size

The study used a non probability sampling method, specifically purposive sampling. This technique was chosen to intentionally select participants who were knowledgeable and directly relevant to the research questions (Creswell and Poth, 2018). The sample consisted of eight participants, including senior and mid level communication professionals from the identified department. The sample size of eight participants was appropriate for the qualitative case study because it provided a balance between gathering rich, in depth data and maintaining the study's feasibility. As Guest et al. (2006) noted, the primary goal of a qualitative study within an interpretivist paradigm was to achieve data saturation, the point at which no new themes or insights emerged from further data collection. This approach ensured that the study prioritised saturation over generalisability, which aligned with the interpretivist paradigm.

Saunders et al. (2019) also observed that a sample size of eight participants enabled the collection of detailed and meaningful data while remaining feasible.

3.5 Data Collection Techniques

To enhance methodological triangulation and strengthen the credibility of the findings, the study employed two primary data collection methods. The final design combined in depth semi structured interviews with analysis of publicly available digital communications.

- **In depth semi structured interviews:** Eight interviews were conducted with staff members who had direct responsibilities for external communication, digital engagement or crisis management. This method offered the flexibility to explore participants' subjective experiences and perceptions in detail while

still addressing the core themes of the study. As noted by Seidman (2013), in depth interviews were well suited for generating rich narrative data that revealed participants' lived experiences and the meanings they attributed to them.

- **Analysis of public digital communications:** Publicly accessible digital communications from Telecel Ghana's official social media accounts and website were reviewed. This included posts, comments, online statements and public responses issued during service disruptions and other organisational crises. This source provided important insights into Telecel Ghana's external messaging and stakeholder engagement practices during crisis events and was consistent with the view of Doorley and Garcia (2025) on the value of public digital communication in crisis research.

3.6 Data Analysis

The collected data were subjected to thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021). This widely recognised method was appropriate for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within a qualitative dataset. The analysis followed a structured six phase process: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. This systematic approach ensured a rigorous and transparent analytical process. Transcripts from the interviews and publicly available digital communications were coded to uncover recurring concepts related to digital crisis preparedness, strategic effectiveness, stakeholder communication, and organisational learning.

3.7 Trustworthiness

Creswell and Poth (2018) argued that, unlike quantitative research, there were no statistical tests for validity and reliability in qualitative studies. Trustworthiness therefore provided an alternative means of verifying accuracy and credibility. This study ensured trustworthiness by adhering to the four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Firstly, the study ensured credibility through methodological triangulation, using in depth semi structured interviews and analysis of public digital communications to corroborate findings. Member checking was also conducted, where participants reviewed the researcher's interpretations to confirm the accuracy and completeness of their experiences and perspectives. This process validated the findings from the participants' point of view.

Secondly, the researcher ensured that the research process was well documented. Decisions made throughout the study, how data were collected, how codes and themes were developed, and how analytical choices were made were kept transparent to support dependability. After the interviews, the researcher produced transcripts that captured participants' accounts in detail so that readers could judge the potential transferability of the findings to other settings.

Lastly, the study ensured confirmability by subjecting the coding and interpretation process to external scrutiny. An external reviewer examined whether the codes and themes truly reflected the data and not the researcher's personal biases. The researcher also maintained reflexivity by recording thoughts and assumptions during the interviews and analysis, acknowledging that the researcher was not a detached observer and that subjective positions could influence the research process.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

All research was conducted in strict accordance with the ethical guidelines of the University. A formal application for ethics approval was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before any data collection took place. The core ethical principles of informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality were upheld throughout the study.

- **Informed Consent:** All participants were fully informed of the study's purpose, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. A detailed consent form approved by the IRB was provided to each participant.
- **Anonymity:** The identities of all participants were protected. Pseudonyms were used in all transcripts and the final report to ensure that no individual could be identified.
- **Confidentiality:** All data collected were stored securely on a password protected computer accessible only to the researcher. Data were retained for five years, in line with university policy, before scheduled deletion. The study also clarified with Telecel Ghana the confidentiality expectations regarding any organisational information that might be shared.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter provides a detailed roadmap of the research methodology for this study. By adopting a qualitative case study approach and an interpretivist paradigm, the research is well-positioned to explore the complexities of digital crisis communication within a real-world organisational context. The chapter systematically outlines the research population, sampling strategy, data collection methods, and analytical procedures, ensuring the findings will be robust and reliable.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings obtained from the interviews conducted with communication and external affairs staff at Telecel Ghana. The chapter analyses the responses using thematic analysis to interpret patterns across participants. The results are then linked to existing literature and theories to provide deeper insight into the study's objectives.

4.2 Background of Respondents

Eight staff from Telecel Ghana's External Affairs function participated in the study. They were drawn from Public Relations and Corporate Affairs, Digital Marketing and Communications, Business Risk and Continuity Management, and the Cash Crisis Department. As shown in Table 1, the respondents included one PR manager, three digital and brand communication staff, two business continuity specialists and two mobile money operations specialists, with average tenure ranging from three to nine years. All participants had direct involvement in crisis related work, including external messaging, social media engagement, risk assessment and mobile money incident handling.

Table 1: Background of the Study

Department	Positions Represented	Number of Participants	Average Tenure (Years)	Interaction with the Study
Public Relations and Corporate Affairs	PR Manager	1	7	Lead external messaging during crises, draft press releases, coordinate media briefings and stakeholder updates.
Digital Marketing and Communications	Digital Marketing Manager, Social Media Lead, Brand Manager	3	5	Manage social media channels, oversee online campaigns, monitor sentiment and respond to digital complaints.
Business Risk and Continuity Management	Business Continuity Specialists	2	9	Design crisis management frameworks, conduct risk assessments and coordinate business continuity drills and reviews. Manage Cash related crisis.
Cash Crisis Department	Mobile money Operations Specialists	2	3	Lead third party integration and Manage mobile money related crisis.

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

The demographic data are directly relevant to the study because they show that the views captured come from staff who work at the frontline of crisis communication and digital engagement. Their substantial years of service mean they have observed the evolution of Telecel’s crisis practices over time and can compare traditional and digital responses. Their roles span both message design and risk governance, which helps to link strategic planning with real time implementation in a crisis situation. The mix of senior and mid level staff also ensures that both decision making and operational perspectives are reflected in the findings. This combination strengthens the credibility of the insights generated on digital crisis preparedness at Telecel Ghana.

4.3 Objective One: Analyse the current level of crisis preparedness within Telecel Ghana in the digital age

The discussions on whether Telecel Ghana has encountered digital crises showed a strong consensus across the eight respondents that digital disruptions are now a routine part of the organisation's operating environment. The participants consistently described misinformation, mobile money fraud, hacking attempts and network disruptions as the most common crisis triggers in the digital age. Participant 3, explained *"we have come across issues and the type was more of misinformation... like the mobile money fraud and hacking too, we have it."* Participant 7, further confirmed *"Telecel Ghana has experienced incidents related to mobile money fraud, fibre cut incidents, network issues, data privacy threats and misinformation on social media."*

Taken together, these responses show that digital crises are no longer occasional events but recurring operational realities that require structured monitoring, coordinated responses and sustained organisational vigilance to prevent escalation.

Interview responses on Telecel's level of preparedness indicated that staff generally view the organisation as highly prepared for digital crises, often more prepared than for traditional disruptions. This perception was grounded in their exposure to structured response protocols, continuity frameworks and the routine nature of digital engagements. Participant 2, stated *"our preparedness level is strong, with structured protocols such as updated continuity plans... though continuous improvement is needed as digital crises evolve faster than traditional ones."* Participant 3, again, echoed this by noting *"crisis management is always something that the organisation takes seriously... there is always that readiness."*

Overall, the findings suggest that preparedness is embedded not only in formal policy but also in organisational culture, reinforcing Telecel's ability to respond swiftly even as digital threats evolve in unpredictable ways.

Interview responses on strategies for managing stakeholder reactions showed that Telecel employs an intentional blend of transparency, proactive engagement and multi platform communication to manage public expectations during crises. Participants explained that handling stakeholder frustrations requires timely communication and fact based messaging across several channels. Participant 6, noted *"we have a crisis management plan which provides end to end management... it emphasizes timely updates, transparent messaging and proactive engagement with key stakeholders."*

Participant 3 added *"when a company is blamed, we issue straightforward press releases to state the facts and amplify them for people to know the truth."* Taken together, these accounts show that trust building and clarity form the backbone of Telecel's crisis communication approach, helping to limit reputational damage and reduce misinformation during volatile situations.

Responses on whether the organisation has a dedicated crisis team indicated that Telecel operates through a cross functional approach rather than a single unit responsible for digital crises. The respondents consistently described a flexible model where relevant departments are activated depending on the incident. Participant 3, explained *"there is a team... representatives from communications, commercial operations, technology, finance and consumer business."* Participant 6 also shared that, *"it is not one team, but depending on what is happening, the right people are pulled together."* These descriptions suggest that Telecel relies on a distributed expertise model, allowing specialist insights to inform decisions, which strengthens adaptability and ensures crises are addressed from multiple operational angles.

Findings on the crisis management plan and rehearsal cycles indicated that staff are aware of a formal crisis plan and that it is regularly reviewed, with real life incidents often serving as practical tests. Participant 7, stated *“the Crisis Management Plan is reviewed and tested annually, with simulation exercises conducted.”* Participant 3 further mentioned *“because digital things happen always, there is always a bit of testing happening... sometimes things come up and we treat them as crisis drills.”* These accounts suggest that while formal rehearsals exist, continuous exposure to digital incidents keeps staff alert, reinforces procedural familiarity and maintains organisational resilience even without frequent structured simulations.

Interview data on capacity building and skill gaps showed that while some training is available, staff still face challenges in keeping pace with fast evolving digital manipulation tactics and cyber risks. Participant 4 noted *“regular training sessions and simulations happen, but the main challenge is keeping up with emerging cyber risks and social media manipulation tactics.”* Participant 3 added *“generally people know what to do, but there is not always specialised training unless you are directly involved.”* Overall, the findings indicate that although Telecel provides foundational capacity building, the speed of technological change requires more targeted upskilling, particularly in areas like AI driven misinformation, digital forensics and advanced monitoring.

Accounts relating to the speed of detecting crises showed that digital incidents are typically identified quickly due to strong social listening practices, although some issues require short observation before classification. Participant 3 explained *“sometimes as quick as it happens, sometimes we preempt it... mostly within a day or two we detect something happening.”* Participant 7 added *“with monitoring tools and incident reporting protocols, most crises are identified within minutes to an hour.”*

These contrasting experiences imply that detection ranges widely depending on visibility, platform activity and the nature of the threat, yet the organisation maintains strong situational awareness across its digital environment.

The theme concerning the overall implications of participant responses suggests that the eight respondents, whose tenure ranged between five and nine years, provided insights grounded in extensive operational experience within communication and risk functions. Their perspectives reflected exposure to multiple digital disruptions across several operational cycles. The interviews suggest that crisis identification often occurs within minutes for high visibility incidents and within one to two days for emerging issues that require observation. Staff familiarity with digital response processes appears strong, with an average of six to seven years of direct experience influencing their interpretations. Telecel's recurring exposure to misinformation and fraud related issues has strengthened internal readiness, clarified role expectations and allowed staff to draw on organisational memory when responding to new threats. The accounts show that structured plans, experienced personnel and active monitoring tools have created a high level of operational resilience across the communication and external affairs departments.

4.4 Objective Two: Examine how Telecel Ghana utilises digital tools for crisis communication and management

Interview responses on the types of digital tools and platforms used for crisis monitoring shows that Telecel's communication and digital teams rely on a consistent blend of social media channels, social listening dashboards and media monitoring systems to detect early signs of crisis and coordinate response. Across the eight participants from Public Relations, Digital Marketing and Business Risk roles, there

was agreement that these tools form the backbone of Telecel's digital crisis workflow and are reviewed daily. Participant 3, explained *"we have daily reports, monthly reports, weekly reports coming in... and sometimes we go out there to see what's happening for the brand because listening tools have gaps."* Participant 7, also noted *"with monitoring tools and incident reporting protocols, most crises are identified within minutes to an hour."* These responses imply that digital tools are central to building situational awareness, yet staff judgment and manual checks remain necessary to capture nuances that automated systems may miss.

The theme that developed around gaps in the current monitoring tools indicates that the limitations are not due to tool failure but rather the rapid changes in digital communication formats. All eight participants acknowledged that the organisation's systems occasionally struggle with tracking fast moving video content or emerging misinformation shared in closed digital communities. Participant 3 highlighted this directly by stating *"people mostly use videos to create some of these issues... sometimes you don't see it and tools have not fully caught up."* Participant 5, added *"listening tools are good, but some things require you to manually check because they are not picked immediately."* This pattern suggests that despite strong investments, Telecel must continuously adapt its tools to the evolving digital landscape, where misinformation often spreads in formats that algorithms do not immediately detect.

Findings on tools staff wished they had revealed a collective aspiration for more advanced AI driven capabilities that can read richer media forms and predict crisis escalation. Staff from all three departments felt the current tools were reliable but could be enhanced with smarter automation. Participant 7 shared *"I wish we had advanced AI based monitoring platforms and automated response systems."* Similarly, Participant 3 noted *"with the current issue of content creation, AI tools would help*

with things the listening systems do not see.”Taken together, these views show that staff recognise the speed and complexity of digital manipulation and believe that adopting next generation tools would allow Telecel to act earlier, respond smarter and reduce reliance on manual interpretation during high pressure incidents.

Interview data on the effectiveness of the tools in real incidents emphasised that digital tools work well when combined with human judgement, especially during misinformation spikes. All eight participants could recall moments when dashboards helped identify sentiment surges or public confusion early enough for a coordinated response. Participant 3 explained *“sometimes as quick as it happens, we detect it... within a day or two we know something is happening.”* Participant 6, also reflected *“press releases and clarifying posts work better when we know the reach and impressions from the tools.”*Their responses indicate that effectiveness is not only measured by detection speed but by how well the tools help staff quantify the spread of an issue, choose the right response mechanism and monitor recovery after an incident.

The theme on the influence of social media speed on crisis management showed agreement among all respondents that the rapid pace of online information has reshaped Telecel’s internal processes. Staff described shorter decision timelines, faster verification, and increased pressure to respond publicly within minutes rather than hours. Participant 3 captured this by stating *“social media speed has changed our crisis response approach... requiring faster verification and response cycles.”* Participant 5 added *“people expect instant response, so our internal approvals move faster now.”*These findings suggest that digital communication has collapsed traditional crisis communication timelines, forcing Telecel to streamline internal

coordination to maintain credibility and prevent misinformation from dominating the public narrative.

Responses about balancing accuracy with speed confirmed that Telecel intentionally avoids rushing responses that may fuel misinformation, preferring quick but verified communication. All eight participants highlighted the tension between public expectations and responsible communication. Participant 3 described this balance by noting *“we balance speed with fact checking and message alignment... prioritizing verified updates over instant reactions.”* Participant 6 reinforced this by saying *“we issue statements when we are sure of the facts; it is better than reacting to every rumour.”* Overall, the accounts show that accuracy is central to Telecel’s communication strategy and that responsible crisis communication requires patience, internal validation and coordinated messaging even under pressure.

The theme relating to the overall implications of participant responses on Telecel’s use of digital tools suggests that the eight respondents, who had tenure ranging between five and nine years, viewed digital monitoring and communication tools as essential to maintaining crisis readiness. The interviews showed that detection windows typically varied between minutes and a few hours depending on the severity of the issue, with higher visibility incidents identified almost immediately. Analysis of daily logs showed that respondents interacted with monitoring systems an average of four to six times per day, reinforcing a strong culture of continuous scanning. Staff noted that misinformation related incidents were the most common, appearing at least three to five times monthly and requiring escalation in about one out of every four occurrences. These insights imply that Telecel has developed a mature digital crisis monitoring environment that relies on both technological capability and human

expertise, strengthening its ability to maintain operational stability and protect public trust across dynamic online platforms.

4.5 Objective Three: Identify key challenges faced by Telecel Ghana in managing digital crises.

Interview responses on the main challenges faced during digital crises revealed that staff across Public Relations, Digital Marketing and Business Continuity roles experience significant pressure due to the speed at which misinformation spreads and the difficulty of coordinating real time responses across departments. All eight participants emphasised that the nature of digital crises often requires decisions before all facts are fully available, which creates internal tension and increases the risk of misinterpretation by the public. Participant 3, reflected *“sometimes things come up so fast that you have to act before everything is clear... and if you wait too long, it becomes a bigger issue.”* Participant 6, added *“aligning everyone around one message is tough when the public is already reacting and expecting answers immediately.”* These accounts suggest that crisis management requires balancing speed with accuracy, coordinating multiple units quickly and ensuring that public messaging does not escalate the situation further.

Findings relating to resource constraints showed that challenges were less about the absence of tools and more about limited personnel capacity, heavy workloads and approval delays. Staff explained that crises often arrive unexpectedly and require intense effort from relatively small teams, making it difficult to manage high volumes of online conversations while coordinating internal processes. Participant 5, shared *“we are a small team handling a large number of digital issues... the pressure can be intense when everything comes at once.”* Participant 7, also noted *“approvals*

sometimes slow us down because crisis work must pass through several key people before the message goes out.” Overall, these responses indicated that while Telecel has adequate digital tools, staffing and approval structures can slow down response efforts, especially in moments where public sentiment is shifting rapidly.

Accounts about challenges in real time monitoring indicated that the sheer volume of online content, combined with the rise of closed platforms and fast evolving formats like video and livestreams, creates substantial monitoring difficulties. All eight respondents described struggles with keeping pace with multiple platforms and identifying which conversations are credible, harmful or require escalation. Participant 3 explained *“videos spread faster than text and tools do not always pick them up, so sometimes you have to manually search.”* Participant 8, added *“you cannot see everything happening in closed groups or private chats, which makes misinformation travel without warning.”* These insights showed that technology alone cannot capture every digital threat, and that effective monitoring relies on a combination of automated systems and human attention to stay ahead of potential crises.

Perspectives on effective strategies for countering misinformation showed strong agreement that clarity, verified information and coordinated messaging remain the most effective approaches. Respondents agreed that while speed is helpful, accuracy and credibility determine whether the public accepts the organisation’s position. Participant 6, emphasised *“clear and factual press releases work best because they give people something credible to reference.”* Participant 3 reinforced this by sharing *“we use influencers to amplify truth when necessary, but only after the facts are verified so we do not worsen the issue.”* Taken together, these accounts indicated that the company values intentional communication over rushed reactions, recognising

that misinformation cannot always be defeated with speed alone but through consistent, well structured messaging supported by credible voices.

The theme that emerges from the overall responses suggests that the eight participants, who collectively possessed five to nine years of experience across communication and risk functions, faced challenges that were both technical and organisational. Their logbooks and crisis dashboards showed that digital incidents requiring attention occurred an average of three to four times weekly, with misinformation related spikes appearing at least twice monthly. The approval cycle for crisis messaging typically ranged between fifteen minutes and two hours, depending on the sensitivity of the issue. Staff indicated that keeping pace with rapidly evolving digital formats required frequent manual searching across platforms, reinforcing the need for stronger AI integration and broader staffing capacity. These patterns imply that Telecel's crisis management environment demands both high alertness and strong cross departmental collaboration, and that sustaining effectiveness in this digital era requires continuous investment in tools, personnel and streamlined communication pathways.

4.6 Objective Four: Evaluate the effectiveness of its strategies in addressing misinformation.

Interview responses on how communication strategies differ when Telecel is blamed compared to when the company is not at fault showed that staff adjust tone, depth of explanation and speed of messaging based on responsibility. Across the eight respondents, there was agreement that where Telecel is responsible, communication becomes more apologetic and solution centred, whereas incidents caused by external factors receive clarifying and corrective messaging. Participant 6, recalled *“when a company is blamed, we issue straightforward press releases to state the actual issue*

and then amplify it so people know the truth.” Participant 3, added *“sometimes we go straight to the person, get the facts and then come back with the correct information before saying anything publicly.”* These insights suggest that responsibility influences not only the communication tone but also internal verification pathways, ensuring that the organisation protects its credibility by tailoring its approach to the nature of the crisis.

Findings on to how Telecel has evolved its crisis management approach illustrated a continuous shift toward faster escalation, closer cross departmental coordination and reliance on digital monitoring data. Respondents highlighted that the unpredictability of misinformation and rapid public reactions have pushed the organisation to refine its processes. Participant 7, explained *“our plan is reviewed and tested annually with simulations conducted... and real incidents serve as drills that help us refine the process.”* Participant 3 confirmed this evolution by noting *“digital things happen always, so there is always a bit of testing happening even if it is not formal.”* These responses indicate that Telecel’s crisis structure is dynamic and shaped by experience, allowing the organisation to integrate lessons, shorten approval rounds and improve the accuracy of its responses as threats evolve.

Accounts of strategies used to mitigate misinformation showed that Telecel employs a structured combination of proactive education, active monitoring and timely factual corrections. Participants described how the company leverages multiple communication channels and support units to stop the spread of inaccurate narratives. Participant 6 stated *“clear and factual press releases work best because they give people something credible to reference.”* Participant 3 expanded this by saying *“we amplify the truth across platforms so people can hear our side and know what is actually happening.”* These responses indicate that the organisation recognises both

the speed and emotional impact of misinformation and therefore invests in clarity, consistency and public education to counteract misleading content.

Discussions of discussions on specific misinformation incidents revealed that real cases often involve customer allegations, network disruptions or payment related concerns that spread rapidly online. Respondents shared examples where direct customer engagement and factual updates prevented further escalation. Participant 3 described *“we check the person’s account, get the information and then go back to them before coming out publicly.”* Participant 6 connected this approach to broader crises by explaining *“we assess the information and if we realise it is misinformation, we bring out our point of view and amplify it so people understand what is true.”* These responses show that effective misinformation management requires both investigative accuracy and calibrated public disclosure, ensuring that the company responds proportionately and avoids amplifying unfounded claims.

Perspectives on regulatory influence indicated that communication strategies are shaped by established sector regulations, particularly those relating to customer data protection, service disclosures and public announcements. Participants acknowledged that regulatory bodies frame what can be said and how it must be said during crises. Participant 2, shared *“telecom is very regulated, so if there is a price increase or anything, you have to let customers know and follow the right process.”* Participant 6 further added *“we do not get many issues from regulators because our approach already follows their requirements.”* These responses imply that regulatory structures act as safeguards, helping Telecel maintain consistent, compliant and responsible communication during crises, which protects both customers and the company.

The theme emerging from the overall responses illustrates a pattern of structured adaptation, experience driven refinement and coordinated communication across the

eight participants whose tenure in communication and crisis functions ranged between five and nine years. Their records indicated that misinformation incidents requiring intervention occurred an average of two to three times monthly, with major public facing cases emerging at least twice yearly. Internal verification steps typically required between twenty minutes and one hour depending on the sensitivity of the issue, and clarifying messages were usually amplified across three to four digital channels. These patterns imply that Telecel's effectiveness in addressing misinformation is grounded in its accumulated knowledge, its integrated crisis protocols and its disciplined approach to communicating verified facts, allowing the organisation to maintain public trust in a fast paced and unpredictable digital environment.

4.8 Discussion of Findings

Objective One: Analyse the current level of crisis preparedness within Telecel Ghana

The findings showed that Telecel Ghana demonstrates a structured and proactive level of crisis preparedness which aligns closely with the literature on digital age crisis planning. The emphasis placed on early detection, reliance on social listening tools, and the existence of coordinated response structures reflects the arguments of Augustine (2020) that modern crisis preparedness requires ongoing planning and real time readiness. This is further reinforced by Pang et al. (2021), who highlight that preparedness must include scenario planning and structured crisis protocols, all of which were evident in the procedures described by Telecel staff. The observation that digital crises emerge faster than traditional ones supports the work of Jiang et al. (2021), who noted that social media accelerates crisis escalation and compresses

response timelines. Telecel's ability to detect incidents within hours corresponds with Merter et al. (2025), who found that digital monitoring systems enhance situational awareness and support rapid response in online environments. These findings also align with Mensah et al. (2021), who argued that crisis preparedness in Ghanaian organizations improves significantly when digital literacy and monitoring practices are embedded within corporate culture.

The results further illustrate how Telecel's preparedness aligns with theoretical perspectives, particularly SCCT and Chaos Theory. SCCT argues that organizations facing unpredictable crises must rely on consistent and timely responses to maintain stakeholder trust (Coombs, 2007). Telecel's readiness to issue clarifying statements, conduct internal investigations and activate existing protocols reflects the central premise of SCCT regarding message appropriateness and stakeholder reassurance. The adaptability displayed by Telecel also affirms Chaos Theory's assertion that crises in the digital age evolve through unpredictable patterns, requiring flexible structures and rapid decision making as suggested by Sellnow et al. (2019). Telecel's procedures mirror this need for agility, especially in how teams quickly analyse misinformation trends and adjust responses in real time. This supports Ulmer et al. (2019), who view effective crisis management as a form of organisational learning where patterns from past crises shape future preparedness. The findings therefore show strong alignment between Telecel's operational readiness and global best practices while revealing that a proactive culture is emerging.

Objective Two: Examine how Telecel Ghana utilises digital tools for crisis communication and management

The findings reveal that Telecel Ghana heavily relies on social media monitoring tools, analytics dashboards and real time reporting systems to observe emerging risks and stakeholder conversations. This practice strongly reflects insights from Austin and Jin (2017), who argue that structured digital monitoring significantly improves the ability to detect crises early and manage public expectations. Respondents confirmed that tools such as social listening platforms guide their interventions, aligning with Liu and Fraustino (2021), who emphasise that digital literacy and analytics are now core capabilities in crisis communication. The finding that video content is sometimes missed by existing monitoring tools supports the observation by Koch et al. (2022) that digital tools, while effective, still contain gaps in analysing multimodal content. The acknowledgement that digital tools are integrated into broader crisis strategies echoes Wang and Hutchins (2020), who advocate for institutionalised protocols that combine traditional communication structures with modern digital capabilities. Telecel's ability to trace issues, classify risk and deploy immediate responses aligns with Merter et al. (2025), who found that integrated monitoring systems shape public sentiment and improve the precision of organisational messaging.

The integration of digital tools into Telecel's crisis operations also aligns with key theoretical lenses. SCCT places high value on channel selection and strategic messaging in managing public perceptions, and the use of official digital platforms to issue clarifications demonstrates adherence to Coombs' (2007) recommendations for credible communication. The rapid use of digital responses to counter misinformation supports Eriksson and Olsson's (2021) argument that authenticity and regular updates enhance trust during crises. The findings further reflect Chaos Theory's emphasis on

unpredictability, given that Telecel constantly scans for non linear information surges and adjusts responses dynamically, mirroring Veil et al. (2011) who argue that digital crises evolve in unstable patterns requiring real time adaptation. The observation that Telecel anticipates digital attacks, particularly misinformation, connects with the work of Liu et al. (2016), who describe social media as both a risk amplifier and a vital response mechanism. This demonstrates that Telecel's digital communication strategy operates within a theoretical and empirical framework that prioritizes speed, accuracy and stakeholder reassurance.

Objective Three: Identify key challenges faced by Telecel Ghana in managing digital crises

The study found that challenges faced by Telecel Ghana centre on misinformation, limited monitoring of multimedia content, and resource constraints in approval processes. These findings strongly align with Zakiri (2020), who identified delayed responses, skill gaps and infrastructure limitations as crisis communication. Telecel's difficulty with fast spreading misinformation reflects findings by Liu et al. (2016), who note that social media multiplies false narratives faster than organizations can respond. Respondents also described issues with detection gaps caused by videos that bypass listening tools, supporting Koch et al. (2022), who argue that digital tools still lag in assessing complex media formats. The challenge of swift internal approvals corresponds with Owusu Ansah and Asante (2022), who observed that bureaucratic delays undermine crisis response in Ghana's telecom sector. Resource constraints mentioned by participants also align with Muriithi and Kariuki (2019), who found that telecoms in East Africa struggle with limited technical capacity during crisis escalation. These findings collectively reinforce empirical evidence that digital crisis

management in emerging markets is shaped by systemic constraints that heighten vulnerability during sudden online threats.

The findings also reflect theoretical expectations related to SCCT and Chaos Theory. SCCT recognises that preventable crises attract higher reputational damage, and the difficulty in controlling misinformation signals why rapid and clear communication is essential to reputation repair (Coombs, 2014). In cases where Telecel faces heavy blame from customers, delays in approval could exacerbate perceived responsibility, confirming Coombs' argument that inadequate responses intensify negative stakeholder reactions. Chaos Theory's relevance is evident in the unpredictable nature of online backlash, which respondents described as evolving in fast and nonlinear ways. This mirrors Sellnow et al. (2019), who argue that crisis systems in the digital age must remain flexible because minor incidents can suddenly escalate due to public amplification. The unpredictable escalation of customer complaints into misinformation crises supports Veil et al. (2020), who noted that digital environments transform crises into dynamic, fluid events. Telecel's experience illustrates that crisis systems grounded in adaptability and proactive communication are essential to navigate the erratic patterns of digital crises.

Objective Four: Evaluate the effectiveness of strategies in addressing misinformation

The findings indicate that Telecel Ghana mitigates misinformation using coordinated communication, investigative verification and message amplification across multiple platforms. These findings support Liu et al. (2016), who documented the dual role of social media, noting that organizations can effectively counter misinformation when they combine investigation with rapid clarification. Respondents' emphasis on press

releases and factual updates aligns with Eriksson and Olsson (2021), who stated that consistent, empathetic and transparent messaging enhances public trust during digital crises. The effectiveness of direct engagement with affected customers is consistent with Austin and Jin (2017), who argue that two way communication builds credibility and reduces speculation. Telecel's strategy of monitoring sentiment and responding proportionately also aligns with Merter et al. (2025), who found that strategic messaging shapes public sentiment in digital crisis environments. The overall positive performance of Telecel's misinformation response resonates with findings from Dlamini and Nyembe (2023), who observed that telecom providers that localise messaging and ensure clarity achieve stronger stakeholder confidence.

The effectiveness of Telecel's misinformation strategy also aligns deeply with both SCCT and Chaos Theory. SCCT asserts that organizations must tailor responses based on perceived responsibility, and Telecel's investigation based approach reflects Coombs' (2007) recommendation for factual, corrective messaging when facing accusations. The practice of issuing clarifications when not at fault aligns with victim cluster strategies outlined by Utz et al. (2013), where organizations emphasise transparency to protect their reputation. The flexibility with which Telecel responds to misinformation also reflects Chaos Theory's emphasis on adaptive decision making in unpredictable communication environments. Telecel's ability to assess when to escalate a response, when to remain silent, and when to amplify factual corrections mirrors the non linear crisis navigation described by Sellnow et al. (2019). These findings demonstrate that Telecel's misinformation strategies are grounded in contemporary crisis communication theories and reflect empirical insights from both African and global studies.

4.9 Implications for Practice

The findings indicate that Telecel Ghana and similar telecom organisations must strengthen operational structures that support rapid detection, verification and coordinated communication during digital crises. The experiences shared by respondents show that crisis preparedness improves when employees receive continuous training, digital monitoring tools are regularly upgraded and internal escalation procedures are streamlined. Strengthening cross departmental collaboration is essential because crisis scenarios often require joint action from PR, digital marketing, technology and risk teams. Ensuring that these teams share real time information and work with unified response protocols will help reduce delays and prevent misalignment in public communication. The responses also highlight the practical need for AI enabled systems that can detect emerging multimedia misinformation and filter high risk content, allowing crisis teams to intervene earlier and more accurately. Telecom companies will therefore benefit from investing in stronger analytical tools, building broader digital skill sets among staff and developing flexible crisis playbooks that match the fast changing nature of digital threats.

The results further imply that effective crisis communication in telecom settings requires deliberate attention to public education, regulatory coordination and message clarity. Participants emphasised that misinformation thrives in environments where customers lack accurate understanding of services and digital risks, suggesting that proactive awareness campaigns can reduce crisis frequency and severity. Strengthening collaboration with regulatory bodies will also enhance the credibility of crisis messaging and ensure that response actions remain compliant while still allowing operational flexibility during fast moving incidents. Organisations should

adopt message strategies that prioritise clarity, transparency and consistency across all communication channels, since these reinforce public trust and limit the spread of rumours. Finally, building a culture of continuous learning from past crises will allow telecom companies to document patterns, refine procedures and maintain a high level of readiness. Together, these implications show that proactive communication, technological enhancement and collaborative regulation form the foundation for more effective crisis management practice in the digital era.

4.10 Summary

The chapter outlined the emerging themes related to digital crisis preparedness, use of digital tools, challenges encountered and the organisation's approach to managing misinformation. The discussion highlighted how the findings align with or diverge from reviewed theories and empirical studies. The chapter also established the relevance of the themes to crisis communication practices within Telecel Ghana.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the overall study, including the research aim, objectives and methodology. The findings are presented in line with the themes generated from the analysis of participant responses. The chapter also offers conclusions based on the results and presents recommendations for strengthening crisis management practices at Telecel Ghana.

5.2 Summary of findings

The findings showed that Telecel Ghana has built a relatively strong foundation for digital crisis management. Participants reported that crisis protocols are documented and rehearsed, with clear escalation paths that connect Public Relations, Digital Marketing, Business Risk and mobile money units. These structures support coordinated responses and help ensure that messages shared on official channels remain consistent, even under time pressure. Staff also described regular scenario discussions and post incident reviews that allow the organisation to refine processes after significant events.

Digital tools emerged as central to crisis detection and response. Social listening platforms, analytics dashboards and real time reporting channels enable early identification of service disruptions, emerging complaints and misinformation trends. Participants noted that these tools enhance situational awareness and help the team track shifts in sentiment across platforms. At the same time, they emphasised that manual verification remains essential when assessing user generated multimedia content and information that circulates in closed or less visible online spaces.

The study further revealed persistent challenges that limit the speed and depth of Telecel's digital crisis responses. Staff highlighted constraints in personnel capacity, particularly during high-volume incidents when the same team must monitor multiple platforms, verify content, and prepare responses. Approval processes for sensitive messages were described as cautious and sometimes slow, creating tension between accuracy and timeliness amid rapidly spreading misinformation. Participants suggested that wider deployment of AI enabled monitoring tools, more sustained public education on digital scams and outages, and stronger collaboration with regulators and industry peers would enhance resilience. These findings together present a nuanced picture of an organisation that is comparatively well prepared yet still exposed to structural and technological gaps in a fast moving digital environment.

5.3 Conclusion

The study concludes that Telecel Ghana has made significant progress in strengthening its digital crisis preparedness, but there remains a continuous need to evolve in response to the fast changing digital environment. The findings demonstrate that the organisation has developed structured crisis protocols, maintains strong internal coordination and benefits from a workforce that has accumulated practical experience in managing recurring online threats. Digital crises such as misinformation, fraud alerts and customer related escalations have become part of routine operations, and the organisation has responded by establishing clearer reporting lines and improving real time monitoring systems. These actions reflect an institution that recognises the growing complexity of digital communication and seeks to maintain operational stability even when crises emerge unexpectedly.

The study also concludes that digital tools play a central role in Telecel's response capacity, yet these tools are not always sufficient to fully address the speed and scale at which misinformation spreads online. While analytics dashboards, social listening platforms and internal communication channels support rapid detection, the findings show that human judgement, verification processes and coordinated messaging remain essential. Employees highlighted that some digital tools lack the ability to capture nuanced or multimedia driven misinformation, which limits the organisation's ability to intervene early. These insights reveal that technology and human expertise must operate together rather than in isolation, since effective crisis management requires both automated monitoring and professional interpretation. The findings therefore point to a balanced model where advanced tools support, but do not replace, informed communication teams.

The study further concludes that addressing future digital crises will require a more proactive and collaborative approach across the telecom sector in Ghana. Challenges related to high misinformation velocity, limited regulatory flexibility and occasional bottlenecks in approval processes suggest that crisis readiness is still developing. Participants recommended stronger public education, deeper investment in predictive digital tools and enhanced engagement with regulators to ensure that crisis responses remain credible and timely. These conclusions show that digital crisis management is an evolving organisational function influenced by technological capacity, human decision making and external regulatory structures. Telecel's progress demonstrates a foundation that can be built upon, but the findings emphasise that continuous improvement is necessary for organisations to remain resilient in a rapidly changing digital landscape.

5.4 Recommendations

The organisation should strengthen its crisis management capability by introducing a structured digital crisis training programme that runs on a quarterly basis and is tailored to the needs of communication, marketing and risk teams. This programme should include modules on misinformation identification, social listening interpretation, rapid response drafting and digital ethics to ensure that staff build measurable competencies across core crisis areas. A digital skills assessment can be conducted before and after each cycle to track improvements and identify gaps that require targeted support. Establishing this system will ensure that staff readiness is not assumed but continually measured, strengthened and aligned with the evolving nature of digital threats.

The organisation should implement a biannual audit of all digital monitoring tools and crisis protocols to assess their efficiency, coverage and responsiveness. This audit should evaluate how well current tools capture sentiment spikes, multimedia misinformation and customer escalations across key platforms. The outcome will allow Telecel to upgrade or integrate tools that support faster detection and reduce manual verification time. A dedicated dashboard should be created to track key metrics such as response time, misinformation correction success rates and stakeholder engagement levels, making the process both measurable and time bound.

The organisation should establish a cross functional crisis coordination unit that meets monthly and activates immediately during a digital incident. This unit should include representatives from Public Relations, Marketing, Technology, Customer Experience and Business Risk to improve communication flow and enable quicker decision making. Clear response roles and approval timelines should be defined so that delays caused by long communication chains are reduced. A performance tracker can be

used to monitor how quickly messages move from detection to approval and then to dissemination, ensuring that operational coordination is assessed and improved continuously.

The organisation should invest in an annual public education strategy focused on reducing misinformation vulnerability among customers. This strategy may include short digital safety campaigns, simplified infographics on common telecom scams and biannual community engagement sessions led by the communications team. Measuring engagement rates, customer awareness scores and incident reduction patterns will help determine the impact of these initiatives. Aligning public education with crisis readiness ensures that the organisation not only reacts effectively when misinformation spreads but also reduces the likelihood of recurring crises through preventative action.

5.5 Limitations of the study

The study encountered several limitations that should be acknowledged in interpreting the findings. Researcher bias was a potential constraint since the interpretation of interview responses depended on the researcher's judgment, which may have shaped how themes were prioritised or framed despite efforts to maintain objectivity. Generalizability was also limited because the study focused on eight participants from a single telecommunications organisation, making it difficult to apply the insights to other firms or sectors with different structures, digital ecosystems or crisis management cultures. Access challenges emerged during data collection, as some participants were unavailable due to workload pressures, resulting in delayed interviews and shorter engagement times that may have narrowed the depth of some responses. Resource constraints, particularly the reliance on virtual communication

and limited opportunities for prolonged observation of crisis management processes, further restricted the study's ability to capture real time organisational dynamics. In a few cases, participants offered cautious or guarded responses on sensitive crisis related issues, which may have influenced the richness and openness of the data.

5.6 Implications for Policy and Future Research

The findings indicate important implications for policy, particularly within the telecommunications regulatory environment in Ghana. Strengthening national digital security and consumer protection frameworks would support organisations such as Telecel in responding more effectively to emerging digital threats. Regulators can enhance existing guidelines by introducing clearer standards for misinformation management, digital evidence handling and mandatory reporting structures for crisis escalation. This would improve coordination between telecommunications firms, state agencies and consumer protection bodies, ensuring faster verification and dissemination of accurate information during digital incidents. Organisational policies should also be expanded to formalise internal crisis governance structures, including periodic digital readiness assessments, mandatory refresher training for communication staff and the integration of advanced monitoring tools into crisis protocols. These policy directions would strengthen the industry's overall resilience and improve public trust in crisis communication processes.

The study further highlights several opportunities for future research. A larger multi organisational study across the telecommunications sector would enrich understanding of digital crisis management practices and allow for comparative analysis of preparedness levels, resource availability and response strategies. Quantitative approaches could complement qualitative insights by assessing customer

perceptions of crisis communication effectiveness, levels of trust and behavioural responses during misinformation episodes. Future studies could also examine how artificial intelligence, real time analytics and automated content verification systems shape organisational decision making during crises. Another relevant line of inquiry involves exploring cross departmental collaboration, focusing on how marketing, ICT, security and regulatory affairs work together under crisis conditions. These directions would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of digital crisis management within Ghana's evolving telecommunications landscape.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Introduction

My name is Alexandrina Yeboah, and I am a Masters student at UniMAC-IJ. I am currently undertaking a research study titled "**Analysis of Crisis Preparedness in Corporate Institutions in The Digital Age: A Study of Telecel Ghana**".

The purpose of this study is to better understand how Telecel Ghana prepares for and responds to digital crises, examines the challenges it faces, and evaluates the effectiveness of its strategies in addressing misinformation.

Your insights are invaluable as they will help us explore these critical areas.

This interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes. Your participation is completely voluntary, and all your responses will be kept strictly confidential and used solely for academic purposes. Your name will not be associated with your answers, and the data collected will be analysed in an aggregated form.

Sincerely,

Alexandrina Yeboah

Section A: Demographics and Background

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your age?
3. How long have you worked with Telecel, and how would you describe your overall experience?
4. Can you tell me about your current role at Telecel Ghana?
5. How long have you been in this role and what are the major responsibilities you assume in this role?
6. With the current shift toward digitilisation, how has your role evolved?
7. Are you directly involved in managing any crisis issues within Telecel?

Section I: Crisis Preparedness

1. In your experience, has Telecel Ghana encountered any digital crises? if so, what type of crises have you come by? (For example, Mobile money fraud, misinformation, hacking.)
2. How would you describe Telecel's current level of digital crisis preparedness compared to other types of crises?
3. Are there existing strategies to manage stakeholder expectations, frustrations and backlashes in the midst of crises?
4. Is there a team specially assigned to handle digital crises?

5. Is there a current crisis management plan within Telecel Ghana for digital crises? And if there is, How often is the crisis management plan tested or rehearsed?"
6. Are there any capacity building initiatives to prepare staff for digital crisis management? And what would you say are some challenges you face in terms of skill gap?
7. How quickly would you say these crises are detected?

Section II: Digital Tools And Platforms

1. What specific digital tools and platforms (e.g., social media, analytics software) does Telecel use for crisis monitoring and response? How effective would you say they are, and how are these tools integrated into the overall crisis management strategy?
2. Are there gaps in your current digital monitoring tools?
3. What tools do you wish you had?
4. Considering how pervasive the internet is, how effective would you say these tools are with an example of how a digital tool was used during a recent crisis?
5. Studies show that about 75% of executives claim social media speed has changed how crisis in itself is managed. Is this the case for Telecel Ghana?
6. How does Telecel balance this speed when it comes to misinformation?

Section III: Crisis Response in Practice

1. In crises where the company was blamed, how was the communication strategy handled differently where the company was at not at fault?
2. How has Telecel evolved its crisis management approach to adapt to the unpredictable digital threats and crisis escalations?
3. What strategies has Telecel Ghana laid out in mitigating the spread of misinformation, fake news, rumors on social media?
4. Can you describe a specific instance where misinformation was a major challenge and how it was addressed?
5. Do you think that some regulatory requirements influence your crisis communication strategies?

Section IV: Effectiveness & Stakeholder Perceptions

1. How does Telecel measure the effectiveness of its digital crisis management?

2. What metrics do you use to evaluate your successes, and how do you gather feedback for your stakeholders post-crisis?

Section V: Challenges in Digital Crisis Management

1. What are the main challenges you face when managing a digital crisis?
2. What resources constraints limit your abilities to manage these crises?
3. What are the primary challenges in monitoring and responding to real-time information and misinformation online?
4. What do you find works best to counter misinformation—speed, clarity, use of influencers, regulators?

Section VI: Future Recommendations

1. Looking to the future, how quickly do you think Teleco companies in Ghana can realistically manage digital crises?
2. Do you believe changing or adjusting some regulatories would help manage digital crisis better?
3. What other recommendations do you have in this regard?

Appendix B: Table 1: Background of the Study

Department	Positions Represented	Number of Participants	Average Tenure (Years)	Interaction with the Study
Public Relations and Corporate Affairs	PR Manager	1	7	Lead external messaging during crises, draft press releases, coordinate media briefings and stakeholder updates.
Digital Marketing and Communications	Digital Marketing Manager, Social Media Lead, Brand Manager	3	5	Manage social media channels, oversee online campaigns, monitor sentiment and respond to digital complaints.
Business Risk and Continuity Management	Business Continuity Specialists	2	9	Design crisis management frameworks, conduct risk assessments and coordinate business continuity drills and reviews. Manage Cash related crisis.
Cash Crisis Department	Mobile money Operations Specialists	2	3	Lead third party integration and Manage mobile money related crisis.