

## CRISIS COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT: CASE STUDIES AND LESSONS

**Sidderatul Akbar** \*<sup>1</sup>

Fisip ULM Banjarmasin  
[sidderatulakbar@gmail.com](mailto:sidderatulakbar@gmail.com)

**Silvia Ekasari**

STIE Manajemen Bisnis Indonesia  
[silvia.ekasari@stiembi.ac.id](mailto:silvia.ekasari@stiembi.ac.id)

**Farida Asy'ari**

Politeknik Negeri Pontianak  
[faridaasyari87@gmail.com](mailto:faridaasyari87@gmail.com)

### Abstract

Crisis communication is a key component of effective disaster management. This research reviews the literature related to crisis communication strategies and evaluates case studies of crisis communication in various disaster contexts. Based on the literature review, it was found that responsiveness, information accuracy, and appropriate choice of communication channels are the main pillars that support communication effectiveness in emergency situations. The application of information and communication technology, including social media, is now an integral part of delivering early warnings and evacuation instructions to the public. The analysis shows that the speed of early warning and post-disaster information delivery has a major impact on mitigating losses and accelerating the recovery process. Clarity, consistency and transparency of messages are known to increase public trust, encourage compliance with emergency instructions and reduce the risk of misinformation spreading. Two-way communication, which allows for community feedback, also plays an important role in evaluating and improving disaster management resources. Lessons learned from the case analysis show the importance of building communication capacity before a disaster strikes to improve community preparedness. Proactive education and training programs can help build community resilience before a disaster, as well as enable more informed decision-making when a crisis occurs. Such initiatives make crisis communication not only a reactive measure but also part of sustainable disaster mitigation efforts. This research provides recommendations for the development of a more integrated crisis communication strategy, adapting to the latest developments in informative technology, which is expected to strengthen disaster management in the future.

Keywords: Crisis Communication Effectiveness, Disaster Management, Case Studies and Lessons.

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence author

## Introduction

Crisis communication is a crucial element of disaster management, as its success directly affects a community's ability to respond to threats and mitigate negative impacts. Through effective communication, critical information on what to do before, during and after a disaster can be disseminated quickly and accurately, allowing individuals and communities to make informed decisions based on valid data (Seeger & Schwarz, 2024). In addition, good crisis communication helps maintain public calm and reduce panic, which is especially important in emergency situations. Thus, crisis communication plays a central role not only in saving lives but also in restoring and maintaining social order during and after disasters (Cedergren & Hassel, 2024).

Crisis communication in the context of disaster management faces various challenges, including diverse audiences, technical barriers, and limited information availability. Given the importance of conveying information quickly, clearly and accurately, communications must be designed to reach different groups of people with diverse needs and capacities for understanding (K et al., 2023). This requires strategies that are inclusive and accessible to all segments of society, including people with disabilities, the elderly and other vulnerable groups. In addition, the digital age brings its own challenges, where inaccurate information or fake news can spread quickly, making efforts to control the narrative and ensure the accuracy of information even more complicated (Neill & Alblas, 2020).

On the other hand, the success of crisis communication depends on building and maintaining public trust in the institutions responsible. This trust is built through consistent, transparent and reliable communication all the time, not just during a disaster. The credibility of information sources, be it government, non-profit organizations, or the media, plays a key role in receiving messages and guidance properly. Therefore, efforts in establishing and upholding integrity in information delivery are critical to positively impact community response during emergencies (Ali, 2023).

Taking into account experiences from previous disasters, both local and international, provides an opportunity to learn and adapt best practices in crisis communication. Case studies such as the response to the 2004 Aceh tsunami, the 2010 Haiti earthquake or the COVID-19 pandemic provide valuable insights into how messages are delivered, received and people act on that information (Vázquez et al., 2024). This study reveals that adaptation of communication strategies based on the specific context of the disaster, active community participation, and effective use of information technology contribute greatly to successful disaster management. As each disaster is unique, lessons learned from case studies are invaluable in designing resilient and responsive crisis communication systems for the future (Balasubramanian & Fernandes, 2022).

This research is important because by evaluating past cases, we can identify strengths and weaknesses in crisis communication practices. As such, this research aims to understand the factors that influence the effectiveness of crisis communication as well as see how theory can be applied in practice. A deeper understanding of this topic is expected to help practitioners and policymakers prepare better communication strategies for the future, especially in the face of disasters.

Therefore, through this literature review, the author would like to dig deeper into how crisis communication strategies have been implemented in various disaster case studies in the past, identify successes and failures, and draw important lessons that can be used as guidelines for future improvements.

### **Research Methods**

The study in this research uses the literature research method. The literature research method is one of the research methods carried out by collecting, reviewing, analyzing, and synthesizing various literature relevant to the research topic (Jelahun, 2022); (junaid, 2018). This method is often used in various fields of study to understand the development of theory, identify research gaps, and to get a comprehensive picture of a problem. In essence, literature research allows researchers to build a strong theoretical foundation and establish a framework for the study based on existing evidence (Abdussamad, 2022).

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Crisis Communication Theory and Principles**

Crisis communication is defined as a strategic effort to manage public perception and convey information about a crisis situation to various affected or interested audiences. The goal is to minimize the negative impact that may arise, maintain the trust and credibility of the organization or government, and support recovery efforts (Welch et al., 2021). Crisis communication demands speed, accuracy, and transparency in delivering messages to address issues and prevent the spread of misinformation or hoaxes that can worsen the situation (Jethwaney, 2020).

There are several key components that are critical in crisis communication. First, a crisis communication plan that has been prepared prior to the crisis. This plan includes stakeholder mapping, communication strategy, spokesperson designation, and protocols for information dissemination and media monitoring (Welch et al., 2021). Second, a crisis management team consisting of individuals with relevant skills and expertise, who are tasked with leading and coordinating crisis response efforts. This team is responsible for making quick decisions based on up-to-date information and organizing internal and external communication flows (Fokaefs & Sapountzaki, 2021).

Finally, there are clear and effective communication channels that should be part of crisis communication. This includes the use of various communication platforms,

ranging from press releases, press conferences, social media, to official websites, to ensure that consistent and controlled messages are accessible to everyone affected or interested (Singh & Gupta, 2021). A clear explanation of what is known, what is not known, and what steps are being taken is essential in building and maintaining public trust. Having a strategy to communicate effectively during a crisis is not only important for handling the current situation but also for the long-term reputation of the organization or governing body involved (Perreault & Smith-Frigerio, 2024).

### **Disaster Management**

Disaster management is a systematic and coordinated process to prepare for and manage activities that include mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery from disasters. This process requires an organization, community, or government to identify potential disaster risks, develop plans, and develop resources and capacity to cope with the impacts that may occur (Heath et al., 2020). The key to disaster management is to reduce vulnerability and increase community resilience to disasters through the implementation of best practices and learning from previous disaster experiences (Tercan, 2024).

In the disaster management cycle, several key phases need to be considered. Mitigation is designed to lower the risk of disasters before they occur through various means such as the construction of earthquake-resistant infrastructure or land use zoning to prevent damage in flood areas (Beeler, 2022). Preparedness involves community training and education, the establishment of evacuation plans, and logistical preparations to deal with possible disasters. When a disaster occurs, disaster management response includes rescue activities, providing first aid, distributing relief and providing temporary shelter. As the immediate impact of the disaster subsides, the recovery phase begins, including restoration of services and infrastructure, and economic and psychosocial rehabilitation of affected individuals and communities (Pathak, 2022).

The effectiveness of disaster management relies heavily on cross-sectoral cooperation involving government, non-government agencies, community organizations, the private sector and the general public. Strong coordination and effective communication among all these parties are required, as well as the use of information technology to monitor, collect data and analyze risks in real-time (Lee, 2022). The integration of disaster management approaches with sustainable development and urban planning is also crucial for mitigation and preparedness efforts to be well implemented and sustainable. Through a series of structured and proactive activities, disaster management aims to minimize damage and reduce human suffering caused by disasters (Boltürk, 2022).

The integration of crisis communication in disaster management strategies is a critical component that ensures the effectiveness of all phases in disaster management,

from mitigation, preparedness, response, to recovery. Effective communication helps disseminate important information to the public, aids inter-agency coordination, and ensures that all stakeholders have the up-to-date information needed to make informed decisions. Crisis communication in disaster management involves the use of tools and technologies to deliver messages clearly and quickly, including mass media, social media, and early warning systems (Ramsay, 2020).

During the preparedness and mitigation phases, crisis communication plays a role in educating and training communities on how to deal with disasters. Awareness campaigns can be conducted to build preparedness, such as conducting disaster simulations, public education on evacuation routes, and information on emergency kits (Spice, 2020). Proactive communication is also important to build trust and credibility; for example, providing information about mitigation efforts being undertaken by the government or agencies can reduce panic and provide a sense of security to the Community (Kausar et al., 2024).

When a disaster occurs, the speed and accuracy of information is crucial. Crisis communication should be done in a coordinated manner to instruct the public on the steps that need to be taken for safety. A designated spokesperson can provide regular updates through press conferences or social media (Hwang & Beak, 2022). After the response phase, in the recovery period, crisis communication plays a role in conveying information about recovery efforts, such as infrastructure repair schedules, aid distribution, and counseling services. Strengthening communication during all phases of disaster management not only reduces the social and economic impact of disasters but also accelerates the recovery process (Eugeni et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the integration of crisis communication in disaster management strategies is a very important element in managing the risks and impacts of disasters. Effective communication supports success in every stage of disaster management - from mitigation and preparedness to response and recovery. Keeping information relevant, timely and accessible to all parties involved, both authorities and communities, can improve preparedness and ensure swift and coordinated action when disaster strikes. In addition, providing clear and accurate information after a disaster plays an important role in the recovery process and helps build resilience for the future. Therefore, crisis communication should be treated as a top priority in the planning and implementation of disaster management strategies.

### **Crisis communication applied in different disaster situations**

Effective crisis communication is applied in various disaster situations with customized approaches depending on the type and scale of the disaster. For example, in the event of a natural disaster such as an earthquake, crisis communication involves broadcasting warnings as quickly as possible and providing information on safe places and evacuation routes (An & Lee, 2023). This rapid response is essential for saving lives

and reducing injuries. The use of early warning technologies and social media platforms is becoming a vital communication tool, allowing authorities to reach out to the public at large with the information needed to take protective action (Revell, 2020).

In situations of man-made disasters, such as chemical leaks or terrorism attacks, crisis communication strategies focus on disseminating information on safety measures, including specific evacuation instructions and health precautions to avoid exposure (Jin, 2024). Direct engagement with local communities through meetings, as well as the use of mass and online media, plays a key role in ensuring that the public remains calm, informed and able to act according to the instructions given. In such cases, trust in authorities and verification of information is critical to avoid the spread of rumors and misinformation (Park & Cho, 2021).

As for pandemic situations, as seen during the COVID-19 outbreak, crisis communication involves public education on health protocols, such as hand washing, mask use, and physical distancing. Information campaigns constantly need to be updated and disseminated through various communication channels to reach all segments of society (Jethwaney, 2020). In this context, crisis communication is not only about conveying information, but also building a dialog with the public, responding to their concerns, and addressing misinformation. This suggests that crisis communication should be flexible and adaptive, according to the evolving situation and information needs of the public (Wickramasinghe & Naranpanawa, 2024).

After a disaster or crisis has been contained by the previous steps, the focus of communication begins to shift to the recovery and rehabilitation phase. Crisis communication in this phase plays a vital role in providing information about relief services, including financial, medical, and psychological assistance to victims (Seeger & Schwarz, 2024). It also involves maintaining open communication with the public to inform them of developments and what the government and other organizations are doing to restore infrastructure and stabilize conditions. For example, after a major natural disaster, efficient communication can help people understand when and how essential services will be restored, such as water, electricity, and transportation (Cedergren & Hassel, 2024).

On the other hand, in a long-term context, crisis communication also aims to help build resilience in communities. This includes education and training to prepare individuals and communities for future disaster situations. Programs such as first aid training, disaster simulations, and workshops on earthquake-resistant building construction are examples of activities that can improve community preparedness. Ensuring that lessons learned from each disaster are recorded and used as a basis for continuous improvement in disaster management protocols and communication strategies is key (Robertson, 2022).

Finally, another important element of post-disaster crisis communication is evaluation and feedback. Assessing how information was delivered, how effective the

communication techniques used were, and the level of public satisfaction with the understanding and response to the crisis can help identify weaknesses and opportunities for improvement (Welch et al., 2021). This not only improves preparedness for future crisis situations but also builds trust and reputation of the disaster management agency or government in the eyes of the public, serving as a foundation for more solid crisis communication in the future.

### **What factors influence the effectiveness of crisis communication**

The effectiveness of crisis communication depends on several critical factors that an organization or institution must consider when responding to a crisis. The first factor is speed of response. In a crisis situation, time is precious; a quick response can make a significant difference in reducing negative impacts (Welch et al., 2021). However, speed must be balanced with information accuracy. Ensuring that information is accurate and reliable is essential to building and maintaining public trust. Dissemination of false or incomplete information can cause panic and make the situation worse (Olinder, 2024).

The second factor is the selection of communication channels. The effectiveness of crisis communication can be highly dependent on choosing the right media or platform to reach the target audience. In the digital age, social media has become a very important tool because it can spread information quickly and widely. However, traditional media such as radio, television, and newspapers remain relevant, especially in reaching populations in remote areas or the elderly who may not use the internet (Lee, 2022). Using a combination of different communication channels can ensure that information reaches as wide an audience as possible.

Finally, a third important factor is the ability to listen and dialog with the audience. Crisis communication is not one-way; organizations need to receive feedback, answer questions, and address concerns that may arise from the public (Chakma, 2023). The ability to interact, whether through social media or other forums that allow for the exchange of information, helps create a feeling of being understood and valued, which is critical in building trust. Listening also provides valuable insight into the effectiveness of the messages being delivered and allows organizations to adjust strategies if necessary (McLean & Ewart, 2020).

In the face of a crisis, paying attention to these factors and integrating them into a communication strategy can significantly improve an organization's ability to navigate a difficult situation, minimize damage, and ultimately recover more quickly and efficiently (Prayag, 2024).

In conclusion, the effectiveness of crisis communication is the result of a combination of a quick and accurate response, strategic selection of communication channels, and the ability to interact and dialogue with the audience. In managing a crisis, it is important for organizations to prioritize speed in disseminating information while still ensuring that the data and facts presented have been verified to build and maintain

public trust. Choosing the right media to effectively reach target audiences, as well as having the courage to listen and respond to their concerns, are key in managing communication dynamics during a crisis. By integrating all these factors into the communication strategy, organizations can improve their ability to cope with crises, minimize negative impacts, and accelerate the recovery and rehabilitation process.

## Conclusion

Studies on the effectiveness of crisis communication in disaster management place a large focus on how communication can be carried out from the beginning of crisis detection to the recovery phase. Key findings from the various case studies show that timely and accurate communication is crucial in the early phases of a disaster. Speed in getting information to the public can significantly reduce losses in both lives and property. This includes early warnings on evacuation and information on how to secure themselves. In this aspect, the use of technology and social media proved to be an effective means to disseminate information quickly and widely.

In addition, the case studies also underline the importance of transparency and continuity of information during and after a disaster. Governments and disaster management agencies must ensure that consistent and continuous communication is available, to keep people informed about current conditions, recovery efforts underway, and when they can return to normal life. This demands the capacity to communicate through multiple channels, adapting messages to diverse demographics and ensuring that information is accessible to all levels of society, including those in remote areas or with limited access to modern technology.

The most important lesson drawn from this analysis is the need for continuous crisis communication practices, not just reactive but also proactive, in building awareness and preparedness before a disaster occurs. Public education and training on preparedness and emergency response measures are key to increasing community resilience to disasters. In the long run, this creates more resilient communities with better adaptation and recovery capabilities to any form of crisis. Incorporating lessons from the past and the latest technological innovations into communication strategies is an important step towards more effective disaster management.

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