

# Crisis Communication Strategy for Responding the Disaster in North-East Asia: Enhancing the Cooperative Disaster Management Network and the Social Network

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this paper is to give some crisis communication strategies for effective cooperation and coordination among the countries in global society. Based on the theoretical discussions, in this paper, five strategic recommendations toward improving crisis communication are offered as follows; First, it is necessary that a small, dynamic team for global crisis communication function be established among the nearby countries. Second, for understanding the neighboring country's crisis situation, it is needed that the common crisis communication organizations which play an important role of disseminating accurate information and giving the collaborative efforts in each country have to be made. Third, for effective crisis management, an appropriate infrastructure that includes open and effective communication channels among different levels and across organizations must be in place. Fourth, mass communication should fulfill a variety of functions in society and provide information, interpretation of events, and its influence, etc for cooperating and coordinating the crisis management. Fifth, to acquire a correct understanding of the bordering country's crisis and calamities, intercultural education program should be established in the crisis communication system.*

**Keywords:** mega disaster, crisis communication, crisis management, social network

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In our daily lives, we have heard occasionally that honesty is the best policy. This aphorism must be absolutely the truth which suggests principle and philosophy to today's society [1]. Especially, in the very time of crisis, we usually cannot know what to do for managing the unexpected and negative event. However, on the other side of this event, lots of people are anxious to hear the honest and exact information from the responsible agency.

Crises are commonplace in all our lives. A crisis is a major, unpredictable event that has potentially negative results. The event and its aftermath may significantly damage an organization and its employees, products, services, financial condition, and reputation [2]. Risk, security, and disaster represent different states of uncertainty in reference to damaging events [3]. Comfort has explained the difference among them as follows [3]; Risk represents the possible occurrence of a harmful event that has some known likelihood of happening over time. Disaster represents the interdependent cascade of failure triggered by an extreme event that is exacerbated by inadequate planning and ill-informed individual or organizational actions. Security, however, includes

government actions taken to prevent the potential for deliberate harm and, as such, it acknowledges the hostile intent of the perpetrator(s) against both citizens and government.

Crises come in a variety of forms, such as risk, disaster, and security. Some crises can be managed successfully while others lead to failures and further disasters. In any case, crises involve events and processes that carry severe threat, uncertainty, an unknown outcome, and urgency. Crises scramble plans, interrupt continuities, and brutally paralyze normal governmental operations and human lives [4]. When organizations fail to address a crisis, the media will seek alternative sources to fill the information vacuum. In the absence of organizational responses, public officials may be the only spokespersons included in media reports [5], leaving the organization looking as if it is not in control of the situation and/or has something to hide [6]. According to Kreps [7], crisis communication can be defined as "the use of public relations to minimize harm to the organization in emergency situations that could cause the organization irreparable damage". Crises vary in degree and probability but all share the threat of causing damage to companies which can be measured in terms of harm to the corporate image and actual financial losses [8]-[10].

This article will focus on three main characteristics making up national crisis. First, since crisis makes the situation unpredictable, in many cases there are no cooperation and coordination systems among countries. Therefore, how to make closer cooperation and coordination systems among the nearby

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countries for a good crisis and emergency management is the focus of this paper. Second, until now there is a shortage of professional study and research in the classification of crisis. Especially, it is necessary for the global society to classify the crises into some groups from the perspective of comprehensive security concept. This paper will systemize the various kinds of crisis and prepare a crisis communication strategy according to the crisis types. Third, from the organizational and/or institutional perspective, if there is little trust in global society, it is difficult to communicate each other. In this article, it is also important to suggest some policy implications of gaining trust in global level. Therefore, the research aim of this paper is to give some crisis communication strategies for effective cooperation and coordination among the countries in global society.

## **2. THEORETICAL DISCUSSION**

### **2.1 Characteristics of Crisis**

Historically, the responsibility of government to protect citizens and property from harm has served as the rationale for developing legislation to protect lives and property in emergencies, disasters, and extreme events. Public security can be defined in terms of governmental functions and agency responsibilities that comprise a distinctive administrative system for addressing threats, emergencies, and disaster [11].

First, a crisis is a sudden and unexpected event that threatens to disrupt an organization's operations and poses both a financial and a reputational threat [12]. Crisis can harm stakeholders physically, emotionally and/or financially.

Second, crisis recognizes no boundaries. It strikes corporations, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, houses of worship, utilities, cooperatives, and families. I strikes our personal lives with disease or accident without a moment's notice. Likewise, the organizations we work for or support - multinational corporations, small stores, churches, superpower governments - are all susceptible to crisis [2].

Third, in every crisis situation, no single crisis has occurred in isolation. The simultaneous occurrence of multiple crises has been the norm. Furthermore, if mismanaged a single crisis can set off a chain reaction of other crises. Thus, in principle, every crisis is capable of being the cause or the effect of every other [13]. So, it is necessary that organizations have to equipped with the plan for the simultaneous occurrence of multiple crises.

Fourth, crises come in a variety of forms, such as terrorism, natural disasters, nuclear accidents, riots, business crises, and organizational crises facing life-or-death situations in a time of rapid environmental change. Some crises can be managed successfully while others lead to failures and further disasters. Some crises are caused by governmental and corporate actions or inaction, leaving simple problems or conflicts that become transformed into major crises [4].

Fifth, almost all the people want to get more information about crisis itself. In fact, the public in crisis situations needs trustworthy information in order to help facilitate and contribute to rescue operations, to protect itself, or simply to avoid unnecessary fear and anxiety. Quick, unbiased and trustworthy information to the public is one of these factors that are of outmost importance in major societal disruptions or crises [14].

Sixth, crises, whether they be natural or man-made disasters, civil turbulence or terrorist actions, do forward the awkward dimension of "un-ness": unexpected, unscheduled, unplanned, unprecedented and definitely unpleasant [15],[16].

### **2.2 Typology of Crisis**

Risk is an inherent element in the study of crisis communication. Crises demonstrate the presence of and heighten the public's perception of risk. People construct reality in a manner that allows them to predict and to manage different contexts. The actual events are not as important when people are making decisions as their interpretation and understanding of them. Risk can be defined as the socially constructed perception of the potential for negative event [17]. The perception of risk results from the interaction of many factors but can be more simply understood as the intersection of control and dread [18][19]. Globally, the space between metropolitan areas tends to shorten. European cities have since long been stretching their boundaries to the rims of their natural limitations and any additional horizontal growth is environmentally and economically challenging. Closely interconnected systems, for example, power supply systems, leave insignificant room for flexibility and obstruct, as well, appropriate measures to be taken in urban crisis situations [20]. An example of this is a situation where initial or isolated disruptions cannot be diagnosed delimited. Single event failures occurring simultaneously might burst out in cascade failures, which in turn will result in a total system collapse or blackout [14].

According to Situational Crisis Communication Theory(SCCT), to adequately protect an organization's reputation, management must adjust their communication to account for possible past crises about which relevant publics are aware. SCCT specifies 10 crisis types or frames: natural disaster, rumor, product tampering, workplace violence, challenges, technical-error product recall, technical-error accident, human-error product recall, human-error accident, and organizational misdeed [21]. As seen in Table 1, crisis types vary by how much crisis responsibility stakeholders ascribe to the organization.

Two key traits of crises are that they are unexpected and negative. Stakeholders will make attributions about the cause of a crisis; they will assess crisis responsibility [12]. Coombs suggests that once crises are grouped, crisis management teams can prepare plans for each cluster, instead of generating plans for every possible crisis type an organization might face. Attributions of crisis responsibility have been used to group the various crisis types into three clusters: (a) victim, (b) accidental, (c) intentional [21].

Table 1. Crisis Types: Definitions and Cues

Victim Crisis Cluster	Natural Disaster	Acts of nature that damage an organization such as an earthquake. Some environmental/weather event impacts the organization.
	Rumors	False and damaging information about an organization is being circulated. Evidence that the information is false.
	Workplace violence	Current or former employee attacks current employee onsite. An employee or former employee injures or attempts to injure current employees.
	Product Tampering /Malevolence	External agent causes damage to an organization. Some actor outside of the organization has altered the product to make it dangerous.
Accidental Crisis Cluster	Challenges	Stakeholders claim an organization is operating in an inappropriate manner. There is a public challenge based on moral or ethical, not legal, grounds.
	Technical Error Accidents	A technology or equipment failure causes an industrial accident. The cause of the accident is equipment/technology related.
	Technical Error Recalls	A technology or equipment failure causes a product to be recalled. A product is deemed harmful to stakeholders. The cause of the recall is equipment or technology related.
Intentional Crisis Cluster	Human Error Accidents	Human error causes an industrial accident. The cause of the accident is a person or people not performing job properly.
	Human Error Recalls	Human error causes an industrial accident. A product is deemed harmful to stakeholders. The cause of the recall is a person or people not performing job properly.
	Organizational Misdeed	Laws or regulations are violated by management or stakeholders are placed at risk by management. Members of management knowingly violate laws/regulations or offer a product or service they know could injure stakeholders.

Source: [21].

**2.2.1 Victim Crisis Cluster:** This cluster contains crisis types that produce very low attributions of crisis responsibility, such as natural disasters, rumors, product tampering, and workplace violence. In this case, organizations are viewed as "victims of the crisis" because the crises are seen as driven by external forces that were beyond management's control [22].

**2.2.2 Accidental Crisis Cluster:** The accidental cluster contains crisis types that make minimal attributions of crisis responsibility, for example, challenges, technical-error accident, and technical-error product recall). The organization's management is seen as not meaning for the crisis to happen(lack of volition) and/or could do little to prevent it(limited control).

**2.2.3 Intentional Crisis Cluster:** This type contains crisis types that produce strong attributions of crisis responsibility, such as human-error product recalls, human-error accidents, and organizational misdeeds. Organizational misdeeds involve management knowingly violating laws or regulations and/or knowingly placing stakeholders at risk.

The public rarely has full information about health and safety risks; there is a role for government to provide information so that individuals can take more informed decisions. As society and its technologies become more complex and the nature of risks more difficult to understand, more time and effort is required to communicate in ways that people can understand, to enable them to make informed choices and to place reasonable trust in those managing risks on their behalf [23]. When an organization is faced with a crisis, it must share critical information with key stakeholders. Lack of accurate, timely information spurred rumors about the cause of the incident ranging from terrorist bombing to mechanical failure to missile attack [24]. People want some kind of explanation for their

situation in crisis situation. If they do not receive an appropriate or believable account from traditional authorities, they look elsewhere. They place more reliance on informal and unconventional channels of communication. This facilitates the development of rumors [25].

### 2.3 National Crisis: Government and the Media

Crisis is in this paper defined as a wide concept covering national as well as organizational and societal dimensions. A societal crisis is based on a situation where the central operators experience that significant values are threatened. with only limited time at hand and circumstances which are very unpredictable [26][27]. An organizational crisis is defined by similar characteristics: significant threats, unpredictability and urgency [27]. This article is now seeking the definition of the national crisis, which covers most of the types of crisis that threatens the security of nation in global society. From the perspective of the national crisis, we first consider the definition of the nation. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* defines a concept of nation as a community of people composed of one or more nationalities and possessing a more or less defined territory and government [28]. But in modern global society, if there is no critical infrastructure, such as banking, transportation, electrical power, IT, etc., we cannot operate our country normally. So, although we have accepted this kind of definition of nation to some extent, in this paper, critical infrastructure is also included in the components of nation. Therefore, from such a point, a nation is a community composed of people, territory, sovereignty, and critical infrastructures. In this context, national crisis may be a situation which threatens the security of people, territory, sovereignty, and critical infrastructures that form a nation.

It is possible for us to classify the types of national crisis on the grounds of national components; conventional military

security crisis, disaster crisis, living safety crisis, and critical infrastructure crisis [29].

Table 2. National Crisis Types and Elements

Types		Elements
Conventional security crisis		war, regional dispute, nuclear bomb & WMD development, terrorism, etc.
Disaster crisis	Natural disaster	flood, typhoon, earthquake, tsunami, torrential heavy rain, heavy snow, landslide, drought, cold-weather damage, yellow dust, etc.
	Man-made disaster	conflagration, building collapse, submergence, plane crash, gas explosion, etc.
Critical infrastructure security crisis		paralysis and/or breakdown of facilities, system, and function related with banking, transportation, electric power, IT, energy, nuclear, dam, public health, public order, system
Living safety crisis		food, drug, traffic, disadvantaged people, economic security, living environmental pollution, occupational crisis, etc.

Source: revised from [29].

In practice, government authorities and the media have quite different, distinct tasks and goals in crisis as well as in normal situations. On the one hand, authorities in crises have an interest in getting particular information out quickly and effectively to the public [14]. Responses to the event emerge by governmental actors, such as politicians, ministers, and local governments. These government leaders are most influential regarding the definition of the problem as well as the selection of responses. Governmental actors or policy makers are key response producers and are important to the understanding of policy communication model [30]. The media, on the other hand, must satisfy the public's increases demand for crisis information at all levels [14]. Added to this, some of the media also succeeded in creating all kinds of problems for themselves. According to Pijnenburg and van Duin [31], a very important advice to the authorities in charge of crisis control and emergency management would therefore simply be that coping with the media has to be planned. And the media participated in defining problems and indirectly showed public concerns. During the Chernovyl fallout, for example, the mass media in many countries, such as newspapers, TV, and radio stations, played an important role in influencing Soviet politics [30].

### 3. IMPLICATIONS: CRISIS COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Crisis management is designed primarily as a law enforcement function to identify and prosecute agents engaged in any hostile act against the state and its citizens [11]. So, key to crisis management is an accurate and timely diagnosis of the criticality of the problems and the dynamics of events that ensue. This requires knowledge, skills, courageous leadership full of risk-taking ability, and vigilance. Successful crisis management also requires motivation, a sense of urgency, commitment, and creative thinking with a long-term strategic vision. In managing crises, established organizational norms, culture, rules, and procedures become major obstacles: administrators and bureaucrats tend to protect themselves by playing a bureaucratic game and hiding behind organizational and legal shelters [4]. In this context, it is possible for us to accept that the mass media play some vital roles in crisis management, but, by contrast, the mass media do not typically

play the key communication roles in preventing a crisis, mobilizing crisis response, or achieving long-term recovery. The media can raise the salience of emergency management in the policy arena, but their inattentiveness to longer-range mitigation and recovery issues lessens this contribution [32]. In addition to this, the mass media's tendency to be highly critical of government response to emergencies as "nearly inevitable failure" is clearly overstated and counterproductive [33].

According to Waugh [34], crisis and emergency management means the processes of preparing for, preventing, or lessening the effects of, responding to, and recovering from natural and human disasters. And Kreps [7] has defined crisis management as "the use of public relations to minimize harm to the organization in emergency situations that could cause the organization irreparable damage"[10]. The comprehensive crisis and emergency management model has been developed under the auspices of the National Governors Association, provided the basic framework for FEMA's IEMS(Integrated Emergency Management System) and became the basis for many countries' crisis and emergency management systems. The comprehensive emergency management model has four phases: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery [34],[35].

Relative to emergency management, communication with the public has one of three general objectives [36]. The first is information exchange, where a manager seeks citizen feedback on specific procedures and policies by providing information regarding the rationale underlying official actions. Second, educational contacts familiarize citizens with the nature of and need for emergency management. Finally, support-building exchanges are those in which the manager seeks to enhance the credibility of the organization in the eyes of the public.

Based on the above theoretical discussions, five strategic recommendations toward improving crisis communication are offered as follows;

First, it is necessary that a small, dynamic team for global crisis communication function be established among the nearby countries. With a small group, generally consisting of fewer than ten people, management can generate exciting discussions, learn the frustrations and concerns raised by key executives [2]. The crisis management process also involves the creation of a crisis team and formulation of crisis plan. The crisis management team should be representative of all levels and

primary components of the organization. These individuals will have the essential duties of conducting crisis audits and managing responses to crisis situations. These duties will include, for example, identifying spokespersons, coordinating information flow during a crisis, assisting in crisis decision making, and working with media and public interest groups [10].

Second, for understanding the neighboring country's crisis situation, it is needed that the common crisis communication organizations which play an important role of disseminating accurate information and giving the collaborative efforts in each country have to be made. It is necessary to map the complexity and interdependence of governmental functions to guide the organizational design required for increased communication, coordination, and information sharing among public agencies that have specific responsibilities for public security [11]. Historically, it is an important issue among the nearby countries to establish the global organization to enhance coordination and cooperation for effective crisis and emergency management. It is, also, possible for the nearby countries to make an organization for effective crisis management [29].

Third, for effective crisis management, an appropriate infrastructure that includes open and effective communication channels among different levels and across organizations must be in place. It should be an integrative system which ties crisis management to major ongoing activities, roles, and responsibilities. This includes communication channels which specify who is accountable for supporting crisis management activities and reporting bad news. Permanent crisis management teams must be established in addition to conventional infrastructure. In the best cases, membership on such teams includes all functions and specialties required to deal with crises [13]. Crisis management should involve all departments of an organization. It should draw on all available resources [2].

Fourth, mass communication should fulfill a variety of functions in society and provide information, interpretation of events, and its influence, etc for cooperating and coordinating the crisis management. Mass communication involves the dissemination of information and influence in society through media and interpersonal channels. It is an integral part of culture and inseparable from other large-scale social institutions. Media forms like television, film, and print - affect our ways of thinking and seeing the world [37]. Nowadays, thanks to the widespread availability of the internet, social media has huge power in society. The world wide web has developed into one of the most important communication mediums available for the quick and dissemination of information to stakeholders [38]. Mass communication reinforces attitudes and opinions, and evidence suggests that media effects are often much more profound than is simple reinforcement [37].

Fifth, to acquire a correct understanding of the bordering country's crisis and calamities, intercultural education program should be established in the crisis communication system. People from different cultures have difficulties in understanding each other due to different meaning systems, such as language. The significance of a context varies from different languages and the use of the context to produce a

meaning differs from culture to culture [39]. Crisis communication takes place at different levels, interpersonal as well as mass-mediated levels. Intercultural issues and problems may be found in most crises today. This is obvious when it comes to crises or disasters involving whole communities, regions or nations [27].

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Often the first indications that a crisis has actually occurred are not as clear as one would hope or expect. Lack of information, contradictory information and/or an overload of information and subsequently a jamming of communication channels are normal patterns in emergencies [31]. This study is concerned directly with the global crisis and emergency management from the perspective of crisis communication and the national crisis. Thus, in this paper, it is a research goal to suggest some recommendations of crisis communication strategies for effective cooperation and coordination among the nearby countries in global countries. It, first, begins with theoretical discussions which are related with crisis characteristics, types, and crisis communication, followed by national crisis and some crisis communication strategies for improving the global collaborative crisis and emergency management. The five strategies suggested in this paper are the most appropriate for improving the crisis communication in global society and they are as follows; First, it is necessary that a small, dynamic team for global crisis communication function be established among the nearby countries. Second, for understanding the neighboring country's crisis situation, it is needed that the common crisis communication organizations which play an important role of disseminating accurate information and giving the collaborative efforts in each country have to be made. Third, for effective crisis management, an appropriate infrastructure that includes open and effective communication channels among different levels and across organizations must be in place. It should be an integrative system which ties crisis management to major ongoing activities, roles, and responsibilities. Fourth, mass communication should fulfill a variety of functions in society and provide information, interpretation of events, and its influence, etc. Finally, to acquire a correct understanding of the bordering country's crisis and calamities, intercultural education program should be established in the crisis communication system.

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