



Assessing The Effectiveness of University Public Relations in Crisis Management

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Abstract

Among organizational challenges, the pivotal role of Public Relations (PR) in mitigating crises becomes obvious. PR endeavors significantly influence stakeholder perceptions, institutional reputation, and sustained prosperity. Even venerable academic institutions contend with multifaceted risks that encompass natural phenomena, student activism, and scholarly debates. This research investigates the effectiveness of Northwestern University's Public Relations (PR) program in crisis management, contributing significantly to both academic understanding and practical applications. Grounded in Social Constructionism, this study explores how shared perceptions influence crisis management outcomes, aiming to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Focusing on the crisis management effectiveness of the Philippines University, this research evaluates its capabilities in crisis handling, public perception management, and communication during challenging situations. Employing quantitative methods, the study involved 405 participants, including students and members of the Public Information Offices, reflecting a balanced representation across demographics. Students and Public Information Office members show nuanced but aligned perspectives, with high ratings for crisis planning, communication, media relations, and social media management. The proposed Public Relations in Crisis Management Program suggests strategic initiatives for crisis exercises, internal communication enhancements, media relationship building, and improved social media engagement. Positive perceptions underscore the organization's crisis management strengths, providing a foundation for strategic program development. These interventions enhance organizational resilience by supporting continuous improvement and proactive crisis management. In conclusion, this study bridges the academic-practical gap in crisis management, affirming the organization's adeptness and emphasizing the pivotal role of effective communication and engagement strategies. The proposed interventions offer actionable recommendations for further strengthening crisis management and highlight PR's vital role in ensuring preparedness and resilience.

Keywords: *Crisis management; Public Relations (PR); Social Constructionism; Perception; Philippines University; Planning; Crisis communication*

INTRODUCTION

Public Relations (PR) plays a crucial role in organizational management, particularly when facing crises. Crisis management significantly influences an institution's reputation, public trust, and long-term success. Even well-respected establishments, such as prestigious academic institutions, face the possibility of various risks, including natural disasters, student protests, and academic controversies. Furthermore, the complexity of these challenges underscores the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of the university's public relations in crisis management. Robust crisis management strategies are essential to mitigate negative consequences and maintain stakeholder trust (Coombs, 2012). This research focuses on assessing the efficacy of the University's public relations in handling crises. Key parameters such as responsiveness, transparency, accuracy, and overall effectiveness in crisis communication will be evaluated. This study aims to identify both strengths and areas for improvement in the university's crisis management, offering insights that can inform policy and practice refinement (Heath, 2010). Building on the theoretical framework of Social Constructionism, this study posits that collective perceptions and shared realities significantly influence social interactions. Applied to crisis management, this framework suggests that perceptions held by those involved shape the effectiveness of crisis management programs and, consequently, crisis outcomes. Moreover,

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through an examination of the role of public relations in crisis management, this research aims to evaluate how shared perceptions influence crisis resolution (Ulmer et al., 2007). This study addresses a critical gap in the literature by conducting a comprehensive examination of public relations in crisis management effectiveness at the University. By integrating theoretical insights with practical implications, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of crisis management in higher education institutions. The study's significance lies in its anticipation of identifying strengths and areas for improvement, particularly in the University's public relations during crises. The findings will play a crucial role in assessing the effectiveness of current crisis management strategies, offering insights that are instrumental in refining crisis management policies and practices within the university. Beyond contributing to academic literature, this research has practical implications for the University. This study aims to address this research problem by investigating the level of effectiveness of public relations in crisis management as perceived by students and members of the Public Information Office (PIO). The research questions include understanding the students' perception of the effectiveness of PR in crisis management, as well as gaining insights into how the PIO members perceive the same. Additionally, this study seeks to propose public relations in crisis management programs tailored for both students and members of the PIO. The insights gained from this research are expected to have a direct impact on the development of more effective crisis management strategies, improvements in public relations efforts, and enhanced stakeholder engagement during crises at the University. The comprehensive assessment of the University's public relations in crisis management is designed not only to contribute to existing knowledge but also to provide actionable recommendations. By identifying both strengths and opportunities for improvement, this study enhances the University's crisis communication strategies, ultimately safeguarding its reputation during challenging times. In essence, this research seeks to be a valuable resource, bridging the gap between academic discourse and practical application in the field of crisis management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Underpinning: Social Constructionism in Crisis Management

This study is grounded in Social Constructionism, which asserts that collective perceptions and shared realities significantly influence social interactions. This perspective is particularly pertinent in crisis management because the perceptions of various stakeholders can shape the effectiveness of crisis management programs and ultimately impact crisis outcomes. Coombs (2012) underscores the pivotal role of public relations (PR) in crises, highlighting its influence on an organization's reputation, public trust, and long-term success. To assess the effectiveness of Northwestern University's public relations in crisis management, this study leverages the insights of Social Constructionism. The framework suggests that the shared perceptions of stakeholders involved in crises, including university administrators, students, faculty, and the broader community, play a crucial role in shaping the success or failure of crisis management efforts. Heath (2010) further contributes to the research by outlining key parameters for evaluating crisis management, such as responsiveness, transparency, accuracy, and overall communication effectiveness. Through the application of Social Constructionism, this study examines how these parameters are influenced by the collective perceptions and shared realities of those involved in crises at the University. Additionally, Ulmer (2007) exploration of Social Constructionism in crisis communication provides insights into understanding how shared perceptions can influence crisis resolution. The theoretical framework of Social Constructionism serves as a lens through which the research paper assesses the effectiveness of the university's public relations in crisis management. By examining the collective perceptions of stakeholders and understanding how these perceptions influence key parameters of crisis management, this study aims to provide valuable insights that

can inform both theoretical discourse and practical applications in crisis communication strategies within higher education institutions.

Empirical Review

Public Relations in Crisis Management is a multifaceted field that encompasses key strategies and tactics to effectively navigate challenges during different stages of a crisis. The significance of timely and transparent communication, stakeholder engagement, and reputation management is emphasized, drawing on empirical studies and case examples for practical insights (George, 2019). The evolving landscape of crisis communication within the context of social media is explored in the context of a strategic approach, recommending investments in monitoring tools, stakeholder engagement, and clear guidelines for crisis response on social media platforms (Agnes et al., 2020). In a systematic literature review, Levend et al. (2020) contribute to the understanding of the role of public relations in crisis management. They identify key themes and trends, explore factors influencing effective crisis communication, and address challenges and ethical considerations. Transparency, honesty, and authenticity in communication efforts are emphasized, highlighting the importance of building trust with stakeholders.

Examining the effectiveness of PR in crisis management, studies such as those by Brown and Adams (2020) in the corporate sector and Johnson et al. (2019) in the health care industry underscore the role of proactive communication, transparency, and strategic messaging in building trust and managing the public narrative during crises. Davis et al. (2018) conducted a comparative analysis of public relations strategies across industries, evaluating media relations, social media engagement, and crisis response mechanisms. A comprehensive literature review (Grunig, 2013) delves into the dimensions of crisis management and the role of PR in navigating and mitigating crises. The article stresses the importance of effective communication for maintaining organizational reputation and stakeholder relationships, covering strategies such as crisis preparation, communication teams, spokesperson selection, and evaluation of public relations efforts. Within the unique context of universities, Johnson et al. (2018) and Jones and Brown (2019) explored the role of public relations in managing crises in higher education institutions. Proactive crisis communication, stakeholder engagement, and collaboration between departments are crucial elements for success. Smith et al. (2018) further investigated crisis communication strategies in higher education, emphasizing the importance of message framing, media relations, and stakeholder engagement. Johnson et al. (2018) conducted a case study analysis of public relations in crisis management within a university setting, examining how universities handle crises and use public relations strategies to protect their reputations. They emphasize the importance of proactive communication, transparency, and collaboration in managing crises.

Assessing Public Relations in Crisis Management, a case study analysis by Johnson et al. (2018), focuses on the evaluation of public relations efforts during crises, emphasizing the role of public relations in protecting an organization's reputation, maintaining stakeholder relationships, and facilitating effective communication. Their approach involves a case study analysis to evaluate the impact of PR strategies on crisis outcomes. Measuring the Effectiveness of Public Relations in Crisis Management, by Anderson et al. (2016), takes a quantitative approach to measuring the effectiveness of public relations efforts during crises. Their research uses surveys and statistical analysis to assess stakeholder satisfaction, trust, and perceptions of the organization's reputation before and after a crisis. This study provides insights into the impact of message clarity, timeliness, and credibility on stakeholder attitudes and behaviors during crises. Ahmed (2019) explored the role of public relations in managing the Johnson & Johnson Tylenol crisis, providing a comprehensive case analysis. This study analyzes the strategies employed by Johnson & Johnson's public relation team, including product recall, collaboration with government agencies, and

engagement with media outlets. The research highlights the effectiveness of these actions in mitigating the crisis and regaining public trust. These studies collectively contribute to the understanding of the role of PR in crisis management across various industries, contexts, and communication channels. From systematic literature reviews to case studies and quantitative assessments, this research provides valuable insights into strategies, challenges, and best practices for effective crisis communication. The diversity of perspectives and methodologies enhances the overall understanding of the complex and dynamic field of public relations in crisis management.

Crisis Communication Strategies

"Effective Crisis Communication: Moving from Crisis to Opportunity" is a book that provides a comprehensive guide to crisis communication strategies. Written by [Fearn-Banks \(2019\)](#), an expert in the field, this fourth edition offers valuable insights and practical advice for navigating crises successfully. This book emphasizes the importance of proactive crisis communication and highlights how organizations can turn crises into opportunities for reputation management and organizational growth. [Fearn-Banks \(2019\)](#) provides a systematic approach to crisis communication, guiding readers through the various stages of crisis management. The key topics covered in the book include crisis planning, risk assessment, message development, spokesperson training, media relations, crisis response strategies, and post-crisis evaluation. Each topic is explored in detail, supported by real-world case studies and examples. [Fearn-Banks \(2019\)](#) emphasizes the need for effective crisis communication to be transparent, timely, and consistent. She guides crafting messages that address the concerns and needs of stakeholders while preserving the organization's reputation. The book also discusses the role of social media and other communication channels in crises. One notable aspect of the book is its practical orientation. [Fearn-Banks \(2019\)](#) offers actionable advice and tips for crisis communicators, including guidance on creating crisis communication plans, conducting media interviews, managing online reputation, and coordinating response efforts. This book is suitable for practitioners in public relations, crisis communication professionals, and students studying crisis management. It provides a solid foundation for understanding the principles and strategies of effective crisis communication and serves as a valuable resource for those seeking to enhance their crisis communication skills. Overall, this study is a comprehensive and practical guide that equips readers with the knowledge and tools to navigate crises successfully. Fearn-Banks' expertise and real-world examples make this book an invaluable resource for anyone involved in crisis communication.

This article focuses on crisis communication strategies within the context of the social media era. [Liu and Fraustino \(2017\)](#) conducted a systematic review of existing research to examine how organizations use social media platforms during crises and explore future directions for research in this area. The authors acknowledge the evolving landscape of crisis communication due to the emergence and widespread use of social media. They highlight the significant impact of social media platforms on crisis management, offering new opportunities and challenges for organizations in their communication efforts. Through their systematic review, [Liu and Fraustino \(2017\)](#) identified key themes and findings from the literature. They discuss various crisis communication strategies employed on social media platforms, including real-time monitoring, engagement with stakeholders, crisis response tactics, message dissemination, and reputation management.

The article also addresses the impact of social media on the speed and reach of crisis communication, emphasizing the need for organizations to effectively leverage these platforms to engage with stakeholders and counter misinformation during crises. Furthermore, the authors highlight the gaps and opportunities for future research in crisis communication within the social media era. They discuss areas such as the measurement of social media's impact on crisis outcomes, the role of influencers, the effects of user-generated content, and the integration of social media

with traditional communication channels. By synthesizing existing research and identifying future directions, this study provides valuable insights into crisis communication strategies in the social media era. This underscores the importance of understanding and harnessing the power of social media platforms for effective crisis communication and reputation management. Overall, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on crisis communication by examining the role of social media and providing a roadmap for future research. This article is particularly relevant to practitioners and researchers interested in understanding and optimizing crisis communication strategies in the context of social media platforms.

Research Paradigm

The research paradigm acknowledges the existence of an objective reality that can be studied and evaluated. It assumes that crisis management programs in public relations have varying levels of effectiveness and that it is possible to measure and assess their impact on public perceptions and communications during challenging situations.

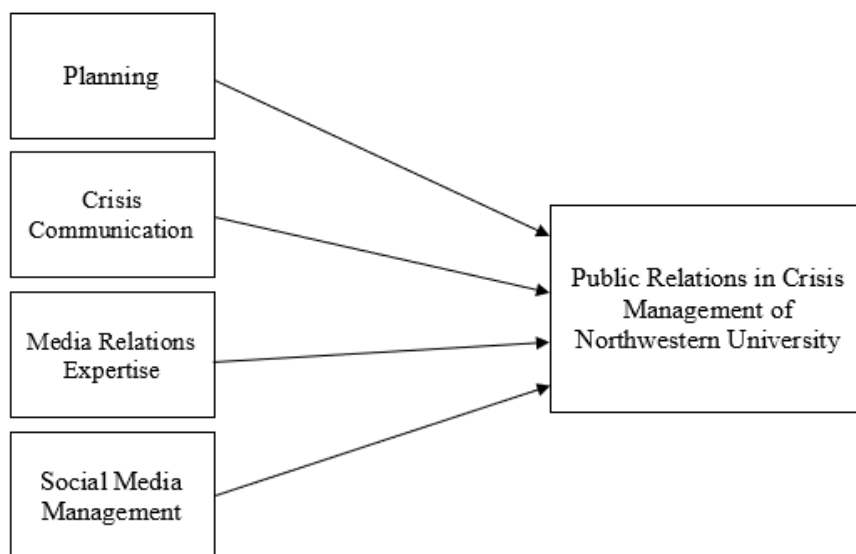


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The research paradigm seeks to assess the effectiveness of various aspects of crisis management, such as planning, crisis communication, media relations expertise, and social media management. They seek to measure and evaluate the impact of these practices on shaping public perceptions, managing reputations, and maintaining effective communication during crises. By adopting this research paradigm, researchers acknowledge that crisis management in public relations is a field where objective evaluation, measurement of effectiveness, and management programs can be proposed for students and members of the Public Information Office. They contribute to the body of knowledge by providing evidence-based insights and recommendations for improving crisis management practices.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The research may use a sequential explanatory design. This qualitative phase informs the design of a quantitative data collection phase, which may involve questionnaires to assess and quantify the program's effectiveness. This study employed a quantitative approach and gathered data through a survey using a questionnaire. The study's decision to use quantitative methods was driven by the authors' aim to comprehensively understand the issue by engaging students and

members of public information offices. The questionnaire's questions were original and not adopted from previous studies, having been developed by the authors. The questionnaire development process involved the random distribution of surveys on Public Relations in the University.

Participants

Upon determining the total respondents of the students, we used the Raosoft online sample size calculator. This tool allows researchers to calculate sample sizes based on the desired confidence level. Raosoft ensures the statistical validity of our study and accurately represents the specific population. Using the Raosoft tool, the total selected respondents for students three hundred and sixty (360) and decided to equally distribute forty-five (45) students per college department including College of: Business Education; Hospitality, Tourism Management, Allied Health Sciences; Arts and Science; Teacher's Education; Criminal Justice of Education; Engineering, Architecture and Technology; and the Maritime Education of Northwestern University who are connected to the social media pages related to public relations. In addition, in this study, we will employ a full enumeration considering the limited number of members of the Public Information Officer for a total of forty-five (45) respondents for faculty members affiliated with the university regularly to gather updates that need to be broadcast announcements and who belong to Members of the Public Information Office of the school. Among the members of the Public Information Offices, forty-five (45) respondents will be distributed into the Institutional Planning and Organizational Development Department (IPODD) with seven respondents, URADIO with eight respondents, Student-Supreme Council (SSC) with fifteen respondents, and The Review with fifteen respondents. Random sampling, a well-acknowledged technique to minimize bias, was employed in surveying 405 respondents. The researchers selected Northwestern University as the site for data collection due to its relevance and potential benefits of gathering valuable insights into the university's crisis management program's effectiveness and public relations efforts, providing practical recommendations and improvements specific to the university context.

Research Instrument

In this study, a detailed questionnaire was used to assess the perceptions and opinions of the respondents regarding PR in the context of crisis management. The research questionnaire serves as the primary tool for data collection, allowing researchers to gather valuable insights and opinions from participants. The survey questionnaire has been adopted by the researchers' knowledge and carefully designed to ensure its effectiveness in capturing the respondents' views on PR strategies and their effectiveness in crisis management. The questionnaire follows a systematic and structured approach to facilitate participants' ease of response and understanding. The questions are thoughtfully developed to cover various aspects of PR in crisis management, enabling a comprehensive assessment of the subject matter. The questionnaire is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on gathering the respondents' profile information, such as demographic profile that has been divided into two categories: demographic for the students which contains; age, gender, and department, and for community member/faculty, which also contains; age, gender, academic/non-academic, highest educational attainment, and community member. This section provides a contextual understanding of the respondents and their specific perspectives on PR in crisis management. The remaining sections of the questionnaire delve into the strategies employed in PR during crisis management and assess the perceived effectiveness of these strategies. These sections include questions that explore the respondents' knowledge, experiences, and perceptions related to PR practices in managing crises.

Data Analysis

This research paper uses a quantitative research approach to analyze, interpret, and present data obtained from the survey questionnaire. The quantitative data analysis will be used to provide tangible results on the strategies and effectiveness of the University when it comes to Public Relations in crisis management. The researchers divided the population into different subgroups or strata based on certain characteristics (e.g., departments, levels of personnel, student groups) and then randomly selected participants from each stratum. This sampling method ensures that each subgroup is represented proportionally in the sample, which allows for more accurate analysis and generalization of the findings to a larger population. Upon completion of the study, it will include suggestions, improvements, or changes to the University's PR practices in crises. The data will ensure that it is effectively analyzed, reported, and utilized.

Table 1. Interpretation of the Scale for Members of the Public Information Office (PIO)

SCALE VALUE	RANGE OF MEANS	VERBAL INTERPRETATION
4	3.51 – 4.00	Strongly Agree
3	2.51 – 3.50	Agree
2	1.51 – 2.50	Disagree
1	1.00 – 1.50	Strongly Disagree

Data gathered from Members of the Public Information Office (PIO) were evaluated using a scale emphasizing degrees of agreement and disagreement. This approach allows PIO members to express the strength of their agreement or disagreement with statements related to crisis management. In contrast, data from students were interpreted using a different scale that emphasizes satisfaction levels, ranging from extremely satisfied to extremely dissatisfied. This scale allows students to convey the extent of their satisfaction with various aspects of crisis management.

Table 2. Interpretation of the Scale for Students

SCALE VALUE	RANGE OF MEANS	VERBAL INTERPRETATION
5	4.50 – 5.00	Extremely Satisfied
4	3.50 – 4.49	Satisfied
3	2.50 – 3.49	Neutral
2	1.50 – 2.49	Dissatisfied
1	1.00 – 1.49	Extremely Dissatisfied

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations will be followed when conducting the study among Northwestern University stakeholders (academic personnel, non-academic personnel, and students). Participants will receive complete information regarding the research purpose and their role. Informed consent will be obtained after presenting and discussing the research objectives. Participants will have the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time. All questions will be answered honestly and completely. Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained. The researcher will prioritize the well-being of participants and ensure that they benefit from the study's results, contributing to the improvement of the University's Management Program. Informed consent will include agreement, withdrawal rights, risk explanations, and participant rights. Consent forms will be obtained before data gathering, and participant names will not be used in data filing. Data will be securely stored. Participant privacy will be protected, and their right to withdraw will be explained beforehand. The

research will maintain a strict policy against any financial, familial, or proprietary conflicts of interest to ensure that unbiased and fair procedures are followed throughout the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the findings, their implications, and potential areas for improvement.

Table 3. Demographic Profile of the Student Respondents (*n=360*)

	f	%
AGE		
17-20	142	39.44
21-24	202	56.11
25-28	11	3.06
29 and above	5	1.39
GENDER		
Male	197	54.72
Female	163	45.28
DEPARTMENT		
College of Business Education	45	12.5
College of Hospitality and Tourism Management	45	12.5
College of Maritime Education	45	12.5
College of Arts and Sciences	45	12.5
College of Teacher Education	45	12.5
College of Engineering, Architecture, and Technology	45	12.5
College of Criminal Justice Education	45	12.5
College of Allied Health Sciences	45	12.5
Total	360	100

Table 3 illustrates the Demographic Profile of the surveyed students (*n=360*) based on age, gender, and department. The data reveals that most participants fall within the 21-24 age bracket, accounting for 56.11% of the total respondents, which equates to 202 students. In terms of gender, 54.72% of the respondents were male, totaling 197, while 45.28% were female, totaling 163. The distribution across departments indicates a balanced representation, with each department constituting 12.5% of the total respondents, equating to 45 students per department. This comprehensive overview provides valuable insights into the demographic characteristics of the surveyed student population.

Table 4. Demographic Profile of the Member of the Public Information Office Respondents (*n=45*)

	f	%
AGE		
19-23	33	73.33
24-28	5	11.11
29 and above	7	15.56
GENDER		
Male	20	44.44
Female	25	55.56
HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		
College Under-Graduate	31	68.89
College Graduate	13	28.89

	f	%
Doctorate	1	2.22
ACADEMIC/NON-ACADEMIC		
Academic	34	75.56
Non-Academic	11	24.44
MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE		
The Review	15	33.33
NWU-SSC	15	33.33
URADIO	8	17.78
IPODD	7	15.56
Total	45	100

Table 4 presents the demographic profile that shows the distribution of participants based on age, gender, highest educational attainment, academic/non-academic affiliation, and membership in the Public Information Office. In the 19-23 age range, the majority of respondents were 73.33% or 33 individuals. Females comprised 55.56% of the total respondents (25 individuals), compared to 44.44% male respondents (20 individuals). The highest educational attainment was college undergraduate, with 68.89% of respondents (31 individuals). In terms of academic and non-academic backgrounds, 75.56% of respondents (34 individuals) had an academic background, whereas 24.44% (11 individuals) had a non-academic background. In the data collected, both The Review and NWU-SSC had an equal frequency of 15 responses, each constituting 33.33% of the total. This suggests that an equal number of members from the Public Information Office have affiliations or associations with both "The Review" and NWU-SSC. URADIO received eight responses, representing 17.78% of the total, indicating that a smaller proportion of members from the Public Information Office have an affiliation with URADIO compared to The Review and NWU-SSC. Additionally, IPODD received seven responses, accounting for 15.56% of the total, signaling a slightly smaller proportion of respondents with an affiliation to IPODD than URADIO.

Table 5. Level of Effectiveness of Public Relations in Crisis Management as Perceived by Students

Items	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
<i>Planning</i>		
1. How well does the organization proactively identify potential crisis scenarios?	4.07	Effective
2. To what extent does the organization have a well-defined crisis management plan?	3.95	Effective
3. How effectively does the organization conduct regular crisis preparedness exercises and simulations?	3.69	Effective
4. How well does the organization allocate resources and assign responsibilities for crisis management?	3.71	Effective
5. How successfully does the organization adapt and update crisis management plans based on lessons learned from previous incidents?	3.82	Effective
<i>Mean</i>	3.85	Effective
<i>Crisis Communication</i>		
1. How timely and accurate is the organization's initial response to a crisis?	4.63	Extremely Effective
2. How effectively does the organization communicate with internal stakeholders during a crisis?	3.68	Effective

Items	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
3. How well does the organization manage external communications with the media and other key stakeholders during a crisis?	4.20	Effective
4. How successful is the organization in delivering consistent messages across various communication channels during a crisis?	3.94	Effective
5. How well does the organization monitor and address public concerns and inquiries during a crisis?	3.85	Effective
Mean	4.06	Effective
Media Relations Expertise		Effective
1. How effectively does the organization handle media inquiries and requests during a crisis?	4.05	Effective
2. How well does the organization build and maintain relationships with journalists and media outlets?	3.91	Effective
3. How successful is the organization in crafting key messages and statements for media interviews during a crisis?	3.97	Effective
4. How well does the organization manage potential reputational risks arising from media coverage during a crisis?	3.96	Effective
5. How effectively does the organization leverage media opportunities to shape public perceptions during and after a crisis?	3.86	Effective
Mean	3.95	Effective
Social Media Management		Effective
1. How well does the organization monitor social media platforms for potential crises and public sentiment?	3.86	Effective
2. How effectively does the organization engage with the public on social media during a crisis?	3.86	Effective
3. How well does the organization respond to and address public concerns or criticisms on social media during a crisis?	3.84	Effective
4. How successful is the organization in leveraging social media platforms to disseminate crisis-related information?	3.93	Effective
5. How well does the organization manage the reputational risks associated with social media during a crisis?	3.75	Effective
Mean	3.85	Effective
Overall Mean	3.93	Effective
<i>Note: 4.50-5.00=Extremely Effective 3.50-4.49 =Very Effective; 2.50-3.49 =Effective; 1.50-2.49=Somewhat Effective; 1.00-1.49 = Not Effective</i>		

Table 5 shows the Level of Effectiveness of Public Relations of Crisis Management as Perceived by Students. Planning: The organization is highly effective in crisis management planning, as perceived by students. Proactive identification of potential crisis scenarios, a well-defined crisis management plan, adaptive learning from past incidents, resource allocation, and crisis preparedness exercises contributed to an overall mean score of 3.85. This reflects a structured and proactive approach with a focus on continuous improvement.

Crisis Management: Students perceive the organization's crisis response as exceptionally high, with a mean score of 4.63, indicating an extremely effective and timely approach. Effective management of external communications, consistent messaging, addressing public concerns, and internal communication contributed to an overall mean of 4.06, showcasing proficiency in crisis communication.

Media Relations Expertise: The organization demonstrated effectiveness in handling media

inquiries, crafting key messages, managing reputational risks, building relationships with journalists, and leveraging media opportunities, earning an overall mean of 3.95. This reflects a positive evaluation of the organization's media relation expertise during crises.

Social Media Management: Students recognized the organization's success in leveraging social media for crisis communication, monitoring platforms, engaging with the public, responding to criticisms, and managing reputational risks, resulting in an overall mean of 3.85. This highlights the organization's adeptness in navigating the challenges and opportunities presented by social media during crises.

Overall Perception: The students' overall mean perception of 3.85 indicates that the organization exhibits commendable proficiency in handling various aspects of crises. From effective planning strategies to adept crisis communication, media relations expertise, and strategic social media management, the organization is perceived as demonstrating a comprehensive and effective approach to public relations in crisis management.

Table 6. Level of Effectiveness of Public Relations in Crisis Management as Perceived by Members of Public Information Offices

Items	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
<i>Planning</i>		
1. The organization communicates its crisis management plans and protocols to stakeholders.	3.47	Agree
2. The stakeholders are involved in the development of crisis management plans.	3.42	Agree
3. Stakeholders are satisfied with the transparency and information provided regarding potential crises.	3.36	Agree
4. Stakeholders perceive the organization's preparedness and ability to handle crises.	3.33	Agree
5. The stakeholders effectively felt that their concerns and feedback were considered in the planning process.	3.47	Agree
<i>Mean</i>	3.41	Agree
<i>Crisis Communication</i>		Agree
1. The stakeholders were satisfied with the organization's communication during a crisis.	3.36	Agree
2. The stakeholders feel adequately informed about the situation, risks, and actions taken during a crisis.	3.31	Agree
3. The stakeholders did well in perceiving the organization's responsiveness and availability to address their concerns during a crisis.	3.58	Strongly Agree
4. The stakeholders did well in perceiving the organization's efforts to engage and be involved in crisis communication.	3.53	Strongly Agree
5. Stakeholders were satisfied with the clarity and consistency of messages delivered by the organization during a crisis.	3.42	Agree
<i>Mean</i>	3.44	Agree
<i>Media Relations Expertise</i>		
1. The stakeholders performed well in perceiving the organization's media interactions and handling media inquiries during a crisis.	3.62	Strongly Agree
2. Stakeholders effectively extend their feelings in the organization by managing media relations to protect its reputation during a crisis.	3.40	Agree
3. Stakeholders are satisfied with the organization's ability to convey accurate information through media channels during a crisis.	3.53	Strongly Agree

Items	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
4. The stakeholders did well in perceiving the organization's proactive efforts to address media coverage and potential reputational risks during a crisis.	3.53	Strongly Agree
5. The stakeholders did well to feel that the organization represented their interests and concerns in media interactions during a crisis.	3.69	Strongly Agree
Mean	3.56	Agree
Social Media Management		
1. How well did stakeholders perceive the organization's responsiveness on social media platforms during a crisis?	3.62	Strongly Agree
2. Stakeholders extend their feelings in the organization effectively in addressing their concerns and inquiries on social media during a crisis.	3.51	Strongly Agree
3. Stakeholders are satisfied with the organization's use of social media to provide timely updates and information during a crisis.	3.47	Agree
4. The stakeholders performed well in perceiving the organization's ability to manage and mitigate reputational risks on social media during a crisis.	3.62	Strongly Agree
5. The stakeholders did well to feel the organization by engaging and involving them through social media during a crisis.	3.44	Agree
Mean	3.53	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	3.48	Agree
<i>Note: 3.51-4.00 =Strongly Agree; 2.51-3.50 =Agree; 1.51-2.50= Disagree; 1.00-1.50 = Strongly Disagree</i>		

Table 6. shows Effectiveness's Level of Public Relations of Crisis Management as Perceived by Members of the Public Information Offices. Planning: Stakeholders from Public Information Offices view the organization positively in crisis management planning. The organization is perceived as proactive in communicating plans to stakeholders, involving them in the planning process, and ensuring transparency. The overall mean score of 3.41 reflects an overall agreement, indicating alignment among stakeholders' expectations, involvement, transparency, and perception of the organization's preparedness. Crisis Communication: Members of the Public Information Offices strongly agree on the effectiveness of the organization's crisis communication. The organization is seen as responsive, engaging, and clear in its communication efforts during crises.

The overall mean score of 3.44 suggests a robust and effective crisis communication strategy, with stakeholders feeling adequately informed and satisfied with the overall communication efforts. Media Relations Expertise: Stakeholders strongly agree on the organization's media relation expertise during crises. The positive assessments include effective representation of stakeholders' interests, adept handling of media interactions, and proactive management of media coverage and reputational risks. The overall mean score of 3.56 indicates a strong and effective media relations strategy, as perceived by the public information offices. Social Media Management: Stakeholders strongly agree on the effectiveness of the organization's social media management during crises. The positive assessments encompass responsiveness, reputational risk management, effective stakeholder engagement, satisfaction with timely updates, and successful involvement through social media. The overall mean score of 3.53 reflects a robust and effective approach to social media management.

Overall Perception: Members of the Public Information Offices collectively agree, with an overall mean score of 3.48, indicating commendable proficiency in crisis management. The positive

consensus spans planning, crisis communication, media relations expertise, and social media management. Stakeholders generally agree on the organization's transparency, responsiveness, and adeptness in engaging stakeholders through various communication channels. This collective viewpoint underscores a robust and well-rounded approach to public relations in crisis management, reflecting a strategic and effective response to the challenges posed by crises, as perceived by the public information offices.

Table 7. Public Relations in Crisis Management Program proposed to the Students

ACTION PLAN						
Key Results Area	Areas for Improvement	Activity	Objectives	Desired Output	Time Frame	Persons Involved
Increased participation in crisis exercises. Improved crisis response time.	Conduct regular crisis preparedness exercises and simulations.	Training and Awareness Feedback Mechanism	Provide regular training sessions for crisis management teams. Increase awareness of the importance of simulations. Establish a system for receiving feedback from participants. Use feedback to refine and improve future simulations.	A well-documented and updated crisis preparedness plan. Increased employee confidence in handling crises effectively.	Implement improvements: Over the next 6 months.	STUDENTS
Increased employee satisfaction with communication. Reduced misinformation during crises.	The organization's efficiency in communicating with internal stakeholders during a crisis is a crucial factor in crisis management.	Technology Integration Communication Protocol Review	Review existing communication protocols during crises. Identify weaknesses and areas for improvement. Explore and implement communication tools for real-time updates. Ensure that all students are familiar with communication platforms.	Revised internal communication protocols.	Training sessions and technology integration: Over the next 3-4 months.	
Increased positive media coverage during crises. Improved public perception of the organization's crisis management.	Leveraging media opportunities to shape public perceptions during and after a crisis is a key aspect of the organization's crisis response strategy.	Media Relationship Building	Strengthen relationships with media outlets. Ensure open lines of communication.	Positive media coverage during and after crises.	Media training and relationship building: Over the next 4-6 months.	
Minimized negative impact on the organization's reputation. Improved	Effectively managing reputational risks associated with social media during a	Engagement Strategies	Develop engagement strategies for different social media scenarios.	Updated social media policies. An effective monitoring and response system.	Implementation of monitoring tools and rapid response team: Over the next 4 months.	

ACTION PLAN						
Key Results Area	Areas for Improvement	Activity	Objectives	Desired Output	Time Frame	Persons Involved
public sentiment on social media platforms.	crisis is essential for maintaining the organization's image and credibility.		Encourage positive interactions with stakeholders.			

Table 7 shows that the proposed Public Relations in Crisis Management Program strategically engages students in key areas to fortify the organization's resilience despite potential crises. The first segment focuses on increasing student participation in crisis exercises and improving response times. The program suggests conducting regular crisis preparedness exercises and simulations, aligning with activities like training sessions, feedback mechanisms, and objectives to raise awareness of the importance of simulations. The desired outputs include a well-documented crisis preparedness plan and increased employee confidence, with a projected implementation period of the next six months.

In the second segment, the emphasis shifts to enhancing internal communication during crises by involving students in technology integration and communication protocol review activities. The overarching objective is to increase employee satisfaction and reduce misinformation, with revised internal communication protocols as the desired output. This segment is scheduled for training sessions and technology integration over the next 3-4 months. The third and fourth segments focus on media relationship building and social media engagement, aiming to improve positive media coverage, public perception, and minimize reputational risks. These activities involve students in strengthening relationships with media outlets, developing engagement strategies, and implementing monitoring tools, contributing to an overall robust crisis management strategy over the next 4-6 months. The inclusion of students across these segments underscores their pivotal role in shaping and executing effective crisis response strategies.

Table 8. Public Relations in Crisis Management Program proposed to members of the Public Information Offices

ACTION PLAN						
Key Results Area	Areas for Improvement	Activity	Objectives	Desired Output	Time Frame	Persons Involved
Increased stakeholder confidence in the organization. Positive feedback on crisis management efforts.	Stakeholders' perceptions of the organization's preparedness and ability to handle crises significantly influence their trust and confidence.	Transparency initiatives	Increase transparency in communication during non-crisis periods. Share organizational improvements in crisis management.	Improved stakeholder perception of the organization's crisis capabilities.	Ongoing stakeholder feedback sessions: Regular intervals throughout the year.	MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
Increased stakeholder awareness of crises. Reduced misinformation among stakeholders.	Ensuring that stakeholders are adequately informed about the situation, risks, and actions taken during a crisis is vital for fostering trust and transparency.	Regular Updates Information Dissemination Plan	Provide regular updates to stakeholders through various channels. Ensure consistency in messaging. Develop a detailed plan for disseminating information during crises.	Improved stakeholder awareness during crises.	Information dissemination plan: Within the next 3-4 months.	

ACTION PLAN						
Key Results Area	Areas for Improvement	Activity	Objectives	Desired Output	Time Frame	Persons Involved
			Include multiple channels for reaching stakeholders.			
Positive media coverage during crises. Enhanced reputation protection through media engagement.	Managing media relations to protect the organization's reputation during a crisis is essential for maintaining stakeholder confidence and trust.	Proactive Media Engagement	Proactively engage with media outlets during non-crisis periods. Establish positive relationships for future crisis coverage.	Trained media spokespersons. Positive media coverage during crises.	Ongoing media training and proactive engagement: Regular intervals throughout the year.	
Increased stakeholder engagement on social media. Positive sentiment on social media platforms.	Engaging and involving stakeholders through social media during a crisis is a valuable strategy for building trust and maintaining transparency.	Social Media Strategy Interactive Content	Develop a comprehensive social media strategy for crisis engagement. Include guidelines for tone, frequency, and response strategies. Create interactive content to engage stakeholders. Encourage feedback and participation.	Improved stakeholder engagement on social media.	Social media strategy development: Within the next 3 months.	

Table 8 shows the proposed Public Relations in Crisis Management Program, tailored for the Members of the Public Information Offices, designed to enhance the organization's crisis response and communication strategies. In the first segment, the key focus areas include increasing stakeholder confidence and garnering positive feedback on crisis management efforts. Recognizing the role of stakeholders' perceptions in influencing trust, transparency initiatives are outlined, aiming to enhance communication during both crisis and non-crisis periods. The desired output is an improved stakeholder perception of the organization's crisis capabilities, with ongoing stakeholder feedback sessions scheduled at regular intervals throughout the year, emphasizing the continuous nature of this engagement.

In the second segment, the program increases stakeholder awareness of crises and reduce misinformation. Activities involve providing regular updates through various channels, ensuring consistency in messaging, and developing a detailed information dissemination plan within the next 3-4 months. Members of the Public Information Office are integral to these efforts, shaping the organization's communication strategies.

The third segment focuses on positive media coverage during crises and reputation protection through proactive media engagement. The strategy involves proactively engaging with media outlets during non-crisis periods and establishing positive relationships for future crisis coverage. Ongoing media training and proactive engagement are emphasized to cultivate trained media spokespersons and ensure positive media coverage during crises.

Finally, the program addresses increased stakeholder engagement on social media and positive sentiment on digital platforms. Activities include developing a comprehensive social media

strategy for crisis engagement, featuring guidelines for tone, frequency, and response strategies, and creating interactive content. The desired output is improved stakeholder engagement on social media, with social media strategy development targeted within the next 3 months. Members of the Public Information Office are actively involved, highlighting their crucial role in shaping and implementing effective crisis communication strategies across various channels.

Discussion

Planning

From the students' perspective, Northwestern University's crisis management planning is highly effective. Emphasizing the organization's proactive approach in identifying potential crisis scenarios and the presence of a well-defined crisis management plan. The positive mean average scores in various planning aspects, such as adaptability, resource allocation, and crisis preparedness exercises, indicate a comprehensive and well-structured approach to crisis planning. From the viewpoint of the Public Information Offices, there is an overall agreement on the effectiveness of planning. Stakeholders commend the organization's transparency in communicating crisis management plans, the involvement of stakeholders in planning, and satisfaction with the level of transparency and information provided regarding potential crises. Both perspectives agree on the overall effectiveness of Northwestern University's crisis management planning, but there are nuanced differences in emphasis. Students emphasize the organization's proactive and comprehensive approach, focusing on specific planning aspects.

On the other hand, Public Information Offices stress transparency and stakeholder involvement in the planning process. This comparative difference underscores the need for a holistic and transparent communication strategy that aligns with the perceptions of diverse stakeholders and ensures a well-rounded and effective crisis management planning process. Levend et al. (2020) conducted a systematic literature review to explore the role of PR in crisis management. The authors provide a comprehensive understanding of the contributions of PR to crisis management efforts by synthesizing and analyzing existing research. The importance of PR in crises emphasizes the strategic role it plays in maintaining and protecting organizational reputation. It discusses the various functions of PR during crises, such as crisis communication, stakeholder management, image repair, and reputation management. [Levend et al. \(2020\)](#) explore the factors that influence effective crisis communication, including message content, delivery channels, timing, and audience segmentation.

Crisis Communication

Students' perspectives highly rate Northwestern University for its effective and timely crisis response. The organization has received high ratings for its ability to manage external communications, deliver consistent messages, address public concerns, and maintain strong internal stakeholder communication during crises. Stakeholders from the Public Information Offices have expressed strong agreement regarding the effectiveness of Northwestern University's crisis communication efforts. They commended the organization for its responsiveness, active engagement with stakeholders, clarity and consistency of messages, and overall satisfaction with its communication efforts during crises. Northwestern University appears to have a strong and well-rounded crisis communication strategy, receiving positive feedback from both students and stakeholders from the Public Information Offices. Although there may be nuanced differences in the aspects emphasized by each group, the overall consensus is that the organization effectively navigates crisis communication, demonstrating responsiveness, consistency, and engagement with stakeholders. Integrating insights from both perspectives can further enhance the organization's

holistic approach to crisis communication. The literature, including "Public Relations in Crisis Management" (George, 2019), which provides insights into key crisis communication strategies and emphasizes timely and transparent communication, stakeholder engagement, and reputation management, Levend (2020), which explores the strategic contributions of public relations in maintaining organizational reputation and discusses functions such as crisis communication and stakeholder management, and Brown and Adam (2018), which examines the effectiveness of public relations strategies in corporate crises, align with Northwestern University's positive feedback on crisis communication.

Additionally, Smith (2018) analyzed crisis communication strategies in a university context, reinforcing the importance of proactive communication, stakeholder engagement, and collaboration between departments. Furthermore, Johnson et al. (2018) emphasized the role of public relations in protecting organizational reputation, and Anderson et al. (2018) utilized quantitative methods to assess the impact of public relations efforts on crisis outcomes. The case study, Ahmed (2019) provides insights into the strategies employed by Johnson & Johnson's public relation team during a crisis. Moreover, Liu and Fraustino (2017) focused on crisis communication in the social media era. The literature collectively supports Northwestern University's effective crisis communication through responsiveness, consistency, and engagement, offering valuable insights that could enhance the university's holistic approach to crisis communication.

Media Relations Expertise

From the student's perspective, the organization is highly effective in managing media inquiries and requests, developing key messages, mitigating reputational risks, fostering relationships with journalists, and capitalizing on media opportunities. The positive mean score for Media Relations Expertise underscores the organization's adeptness in navigating media interactions during crises. Members of the Public Information Offices express strong agreement regarding the organization's media relation expertise. Stakeholders commend the organization's ability to advocate for their interests in media interactions, adeptly handle inquiries, convey accurate information, and proactively manage media coverage and reputational risks. The comparative analysis reveals a convergence in perspectives between students and members of the Public Information Offices regarding the organization's excellence in media relation expertise during crises. The positive assessments from both groups emphasize the organization's success in navigating media interactions, building positive relationships, and effectively managing reputational risks through strategic communication. This alignment suggests a robust and effective media relations strategy that resonates positively with both students and key stakeholders within the Public Information Offices.

Liu and Fraustino (2017) discuss crisis communication strategies within the context of the social media era, emphasizing the impact of social media platforms on crisis management. This study explores various crisis communication strategies employed on social media, including real-time monitoring, stakeholder engagement, crisis response tactics, message dissemination, and reputation management. The article also addresses the need for organizations to effectively leverage social media platforms to engage with stakeholders and counter misinformation during crises. Furthermore, it identifies gaps and opportunities for future research in crisis communication within the social media era. This passage is relevant to the discussion on media relation expertise because it highlights the evolving landscape of crisis communication and the increasing significance of social media. Understanding and utilizing social media platforms effectively during crises are crucial aspects of media relations expertise, and the insights from this article can contribute to enhancing an organization's media relations strategy during challenging times.

Social Media Management

From the students' perspective, Northwestern University has excelled in using social media platforms to disseminate crisis-related information, engage with the public, and mitigate reputational risks. The positive mean score for Social Media Management reflects the organization's adeptness in leveraging social media during challenging times. From the perspective of the Members of the Public Information Offices, stakeholders strongly agree with the university's effectiveness in social media management. The positive mean scores for responsiveness, reputational risk management, stakeholder engagement, satisfaction with timely updates, and effective involvement through social media underscore the university's proficiency in navigating digital platforms during crises. Comparative analysis of Northwestern University's proficiency in social media management during crises from both the students' and public information offices' perspectives. This alignment signifies the university's effectiveness in leveraging digital platforms to disseminate information, engage stakeholders, and protect its reputation in times of crisis.

The positive feedback from stakeholders emphasizes Northwestern University's success in navigating the challenges of crisis communication through the strategic use of social media. [Liu and Fraustino \(2017\)](#) explore crisis communication strategies within the context of the social media era. This article acknowledges the evolving landscape of crisis communication due to the emergence and widespread use of social media, emphasizing the impact of social media platforms on crisis management. This systematic review identifies key themes and findings, and discusses various crisis communication strategies employed on social media platforms. This literature is pertinent to the comparative analysis of Northwestern University's proficiency in social media management during crises, as it provides insights into the evolving landscape of crisis communication in the context of social media. This study emphasizes the importance of understanding and harnessing the power of social media platforms for effective crisis communication and reputation management, aligning with the themes discussed in the analysis.

Overall perceptions, the student's average score of 3.85 reflects their high proficiency in managing various aspects of crisis. Their positive feedback emphasizes effective planning, crisis communication, media relations, and social media management. Similarly, the Public Information Office members collectively scored an average of 3.48, affirming the organization's strong and comprehensive approach to public relations in crisis management.

Contributions to Public Relations in Crisis Management and New Insights for PR Literature that is about Planning, Crisis Communication, Media Relations Expertise, Social Media Management, and Overall Perception: This study offers a comprehensive exploration of Northwestern University's crisis management strategies from the perspectives of both students and the Public Information Office. In planning, students emphasize the organization's proactive and comprehensive approach, while Public Information Offices stress transparency and stakeholder involvement. The comparative analysis highlights the need for a holistic and transparent communication strategy aligned with diverse stakeholder perceptions. In crisis communication, both students and Public Information Offices strongly endorse Northwestern University's strategy, emphasizing responsiveness, clarity, and engagement during crises. This study showcases a well-rounded crisis communication strategy, contributing to the existing literature on the strategic role of PR in maintaining organizational reputation. The comparative analysis of media relations expertise reveals alignment between students and Public Information Offices, suggesting a robust and effective media relations strategy, especially in the context of the evolving social media landscape. Insights from [Liu and Fraustino \(2017\)](#) exploration provide additional context to the changing dynamics of media relations during crises. Regarding social media management, the study underscores Northwestern University's proficiency in leveraging digital platforms to disseminate

information, engage stakeholders, and protect its reputation. This aligns with contemporary literature on the impact of social media on crisis communication. The overall perception of high proficiency in managing various crisis aspects from both students and Public Information Office members contributes valuable insights to the existing literature on public relations in crisis management. This study provides a holistic evaluation of the organization's crisis management efforts, emphasizing the importance of aligning strategies with diverse stakeholder expectations and contributing to the evolving discourse on effective PR practices in crises.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the study's findings, the assessment of the Level of Effectiveness of Public Relations in Crisis Management, as perceived by both students and members of the Public Information Offices, underscores the organization's adeptness in crisis management. Students commend the organization for its proactive crisis planning, including identifying potential crisis scenarios and maintaining a well-defined crisis management plan. The commitment to continuous improvement is evident through regular preparedness exercises, adaptive plans, and resource allocation. In crisis communication, both students and Public Information Office members appreciate the organization's effectiveness in delivering timely and accurate responses, ensuring consistent messaging across channels, proactive management of public concerns, and satisfactory internal communication. Stakeholders express feeling adequately informed about situations, risks, and actions taken during crises. Media relations expertise and social media management are acknowledged strengths, with stakeholders recognizing the organization's handling of media inquiries, crafting strategic messages, managing reputational risks, and leveraging digital platforms for effective engagement. The proposed Public Relations in Crisis Management Program, which involves students in crisis exercises, technology integration, and media relationship building, reflects the organization's commitment to continuous improvement and resilience.

The overall consensus among both students and Public Information Office members regarding the effectiveness of the organization's public relations in crisis management not only suggests a strong foundation for navigating crises but also emphasizes the significance of public relations in this context. These insights underscore the crucial role of effective communication and engagement strategies in crisis management, providing valuable feedback for the organization to enhance its strengths further and underscore the vital role of PR in navigating the complexities of crises.

These recommendations focus on preparedness and collaboration, communication optimization, innovative engagement strategies, and advanced training readiness, as follows: (1) Use proactive planning through real-time risk assessments and enhance collaboration in crisis management plans for a shared sense of responsibility. (2) Introduce other technology-driven training for students, including immersive simulations and innovative crisis exercises with new elements and emerging technologies for engaging experiences and to implement mechanisms for faster crisis responses.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

The study, while comprehensive, has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. It primarily relies on the perceptions of students and Public Information Office (PIO) members, potentially lacking a broader stakeholder perspective. To address this, future studies could include viewpoints from faculty, alumni, and local community members to provide a more comprehensive understanding. The study's reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of response bias, as participants may provide socially desirable responses that could impact the accuracy of their assessments. To enhance data reliability, future research should consider employing mixed-

method approaches, combining self-reported data with observational or qualitative methods. This study focuses on universities, limiting its generalizability to other academic institutions. Although the findings offer valuable insights into crisis management within this context, caution should be exercised when applying these results to different organizational settings.

Expanding on the conclusions drawn from this study, future research directions can delve into additional aspects of crisis management effectiveness. Exploring the viewpoints of various stakeholders, including faculty, alumni, and members of the local community, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of public relations in crisis scenarios within academic institutions. Further research could focus on conducting comparative analyses of crisis management strategies across different universities, enabling the identification of best practices and the establishment of benchmarks. Comparative studies may reveal distinct approaches adopted by various institutions, thus contributing to the development of flexible crisis management frameworks. In addition, future studies could examine the long-term repercussions of crisis management strategies on organizational reputation and stakeholder trust. This study monitored the outcomes of crisis communication and management efforts over extended periods, providing valuable insights into the sustained effectiveness of implemented strategies.

Furthermore, investigating the role of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and data analytics, in crisis management within academic institutions could be a promising area of exploration. Evaluating how technology-driven solutions enhance crisis preparedness, response times, and overall effectiveness could provide valuable insights for modernizing crisis management practices. Overall, future research endeavors should aim to broaden the spectrum of stakeholders considered, utilize diverse research methods, explore comparative analyses across institutions, and investigate the evolving role of technology in crisis management within academic settings.

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