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Internal crisis communication: exploring antecedents and consequences from a managerial viewpoint

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Over the past decade, internal crisis communication (ICC) has experienced significant advancements and transformations due to various factors, including technological developments, changing communication landscapes, and the increasing need for effective crisis management within organizations. Crises have impacted organizations differently worldwide, placing management under tremendous pressure to communicate their decisions to employees and provide encouraging messages amidst the uncertainty. Based on prior theoretical and empirical research, this paper explores the cause-and-effect relationships between the antecedents of internal crisis communication and their consequences from a managerial perspective in the workplace. This research proposes a new conceptual framework that integrates multiple key factors in internal crisis communication, offering a comprehensive approach to studying the interplay between antecedents and consequences. The framework specifically examines how three antecedents—safety culture, work engagement, and leadership effectiveness—influence and interact with two consequences: perceived organizational performance and employee commitment. By synthesizing these diverse elements into a cohesive model, this framework contributes to the literature on internal crisis communication in several ways. First, it enables the examination of both direct and indirect relationships between antecedents and consequences, potentially revealing new insights into the complexities of crisis communication dynamics. Second, it provides a structured approach for future empirical studies to test and validate these relationships in various organizational contexts. Lastly, it offers a research agenda to advance the study of internal crisis communication, aiding both academics and practicing managers in developing strategies to mitigate uncertainty during crises.

KEYWORDS

internal crisis communication, managerial, safety culture, work engagement, leadership effectiveness

Introduction

Handling crisis communication is one of the most critical decisions an organization can make. Crises pose significant threats that can impact an organization's reputation and its interactions with stakeholders (Coombs, 2022, 2007). Heath (2010) emphasizes the urgency of preventing, mitigating, and responding to crises effectively to protect

stakeholders and reputations. Much research on crises focuses on strategies for external crisis response and communication used by organizations to maintain their image or reputation among stakeholders (Mohamad et al., 2022a,b; Ravazzani, 2016). Shamma (2012) also highlights the importance of corporate reputation as a shield during crises, illustrating the strong relationship between crisis management and organizational reputation.

In crisis management, managers and executives act as evaluators, enhancing their ability to handle crises (Pearson, 2002). Guth (1995) advocates for public relations practitioners to play a managerial role during crises because communication is a critical aspect of crisis management. An organization's experience in handling crises influences how it adopts the management functions of public relations (Seeger and Schwarz, 2024; Guth, 1995). According to Fayol (2016) management functions—planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling—public relations management roles range from executive to manager. Management plays a natural and vital role in responding to and handling organizational crises.

Recent studies on crisis communication highlight the relationship between the crisis situation, communication strategies, and perceptions of the crisis (Adamu and Mohamad, 2019). Understanding these elements is crucial for grasping how organizations respond during crises. Previous research has primarily focused on the external aspects of crisis communication, such as protecting the organization's reputation during a crisis (Adamu et al., 2018). However, the internal dimension of crisis communication has received less attention (Heide and Simonsson, 2019; Adamu et al., 2018).

The role of managers is equally important during crises, as they significantly influence the success of internal crisis communication (Heide and Simonsson, 2021; Strandberg and Vigso, 2016). Managerial internal crisis communication strategies contribute to how organizations handle crises (Strandberg and Vigso, 2016). A considerable amount of literature has noted the limited research on the internal perspective of crisis communication (Heide and Simonsson, 2021; Johansen et al., 2012; Taylor, 2010). The need for deeper exploration of organizational dynamics and internal processes remains evident, as highlighted by multiple scholars. Johansen et al. (2012), and more recently Liu-Lastres et al. (2023) have all emphasized the importance of conducting additional research to uncover the intricacies of intra-organizational relationships and mechanisms.

While existing literature acknowledges the importance of internal crisis communication, there remains a significant gap in our understanding of the specific managerial factors that influence its effectiveness and outcomes. This study aims to address this gap by examining the antecedents and consequences of internal crisis communication from a managerial perspective. The primary purpose of this research is to investigate how safety culture, work engagement, and leadership effectiveness impact internal crisis communication, and subsequently, how these factors influence perceived employee commitment and organizational performance. By focusing on these relationships, this research seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the internal dynamics of crisis communication within organizations.

To guide this investigation, several key research questions have been formulated. These questions explore how safety

culture, work engagement, and leadership effectiveness influence internal crisis communication; the impact of effective internal crisis communication on perceived employee commitment and organizational performance; and the extent to which managerial practices mediate the relationship between internal crisis communication and organizational outcomes.

This study aims to contribute to the field of crisis communication in several ways. First, it develops a comprehensive framework that integrates managerial factors, internal crisis communication, and organizational outcomes. Second, it provides empirical evidence on the role of safety culture and work engagement in crisis communication, areas that have been underexplored in previous research. Finally, it offers practical insights for managers on how to enhance internal crisis communication effectiveness and, consequently, improve organizational resilience during crises.

This study proposes a framework to investigate the antecedents and consequences of internal crisis communication from a managerial perspective. It aims to explore the relationship between safety culture, work engagement, and leadership effectiveness on internal crisis communication and its consequences for perceived employee commitment and perceived organizational performance from a managerial standpoint. By addressing these aspects, this research seeks to fill a crucial gap in the literature and provide valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners in the field of crisis management and organizational communication.

Literature review

Internal crisis communication

Internal crisis communication is a critical subset of internal communication, which plays an importance role in organizational success and strategic management (Li et al., 2021; Welch and Jackson, 2007). Effective internal communication not only facilitates the achievement of organizational objectives but also fosters employee engagement (Kang and Sung, 2017; Kress, 2005). Scholes (1997) underscores internal communication's pivotal role in strategic management, while Cheney and Christensen (2001) illustrate its multifaceted nature. They describe internal communication as connecting employee interactions, mission statements, and organizational development across three stages: daily management, strategic alignment, and project management.

Kalla (2005) in Qin and Men (2023) identified that internal communication functions at both formal and informal levels across all organization tiers. This includes four broad communication domains: business communication (Reinsch, 1996), management communication (Smeltzer, 1996), corporate communication (Argenti, 1996), and organizational communication (Mumby and Stohl, 1996). Cornelissen (2023) further refines this by defining internal communication as the firms' methods for employees, highlighting the importance of media consideration in message content and implications (Soedarsono et al., 2020; Cornelissen, 2023).

Internal crisis communication involves maintaining communication quality during negative situations during adverse situations, fostering trust and ensuring two-way communication

with all internal stakeholders (Adamu and Mohamad, 2019). Johansen et al. (2012) describe internal crisis communication as the interaction between managers and employees before, during, and after a crisis, emphasizing that effective crisis communication builds organization trust and enhances reputation (Heide and Simonsson, 2019).

Recent research underscores the growing interest in internal crisis communication, focusing on the internal dimension's role in managing crises (Frandsen and Johansen, 2016). This research highlights the critical nature of internal stakeholders' actions and perceptions in navigating crises (Falkheimer et al., 2022). Strandberg and Vigso (2016), expanding on Heide and Simonsson (2015), discuss the differences between external and internal crisis communication in terms of crisis stage, stakeholder relationship and management perception.

Generally, internal crisis communication is fundamentally about the interaction between managers and employees during a crisis (Frandsen and Johansen, 2016). Nowling and Seeger (2020) emphasize the importance of sensemaking process, which arise from the complex psychological dimensions of internal stakeholders (Frandsen and Johansen, 2016). This reinforces the view of internal crisis communication as a critical managerial process involving internal communication strategies during crises.

Several scholars have identified various types of internal crisis communication based on different contexts. Marcus and Goodman (1991) categorized crises as unexpected, product safety, and health incidents. Coombs and Holladay (2023) differentiated crises into victim, accidental, and intentional types. Wooten and James (2008) classified internal crises based on their primary impacts, while Pauchant et al. (1992) focused on social and human crises. This study adopts a classification of internal crisis communication based on unexpected negative situations faced internally by organizations.

Internal crisis communication from a managerial perspective

Internal crisis communication (ICC) encompasses the strategies and processes used by management to convey information and ensure effective communication within an organization during a crisis. ICC is crucial for keeping employees informed, aligned with organizational goals, and engage in crisis mitigation efforts (Heide and Simonsson, 2019). Effective ICC involves not only the timely, accurate, and transparent dissemination of information to reduce uncertainty and foster trust among employees but also providing emotional support to maintain morale and motivation (Cornelissen, 2023).

Managers play an important role in ICC by acting as the primary source of information and support for employees. The effectiveness of ICC is contingent upon managers' abilities to anticipate potential crises, prepare communication plans, and implement them effectively when a crisis arises (Youngblood, 2010). This requires a comprehensive understanding of the organizational culture, crisis dynamics, and employee communication preferences. Creating an open communication climate, where employees feel safe to express concerns and provide

feedback, can significantly enhance the organization's resilience and adaptability during crises (Mazzei and Ravazzani, 2022).

The success of ICC in reducing stakeholder uncertainty and ambiguity can be evaluated through systematic crisis management strategies, crisis management teams, and proactive efforts to address internal crisis components (Johansen et al., 2012). Recent studies have identified several relevant factors in ICC, such as decision-making during crises (Boin et al., 2018; Janis, 1982), perception of crisis (Leta and Chan, 2021; Penrose, 2000), defense mechanisms (Gori et al., 2020; Pauchant et al., 1992), organizational study (Clément and Roux-Dufort, 2020; Roux-Dufort, 2000), and the influence of organizational culture on the organization's ability to handle a crisis (Orth and Schuldis, 2021; Mitroff, 2004). Frandsen and Johansen (2016) underscore the importance of communication methods before and during a crisis, emphasizing that these communicative elements are crucial for managing internal perspective on crisis management and communication (Taylor, 2010).

ICC involves extensive interaction between managers and employees before, during, and after a crisis (Johansen et al., 2012). Managers are responsible for developing the dominant organizational narrative that aids in managing internal crises (Willihnganz et al., 2004). Due to their close relationship with employees and their ability to motivate them, managers are the key communicators during crises. Line managers, heavily involved in internal communication and human resources operations, act as competent communicators because they have access to the organizational culture (Ravazzani, 2016).

Mazzei and Ravazzani (2022) highlight the importance of strategy in internal crisis management and communication, proposing a model involving transparency, cohesion, activation of behaviors, evasion, and underutilization. Effective communication supports these strategies and enhances crisis management (Ravazzani, 2016). The root of ICC strategy, as analyzed by Ravazzani (2016), stems from a rhetorical approach, situational factors affecting strategy choice, and crisis communication content objectives.

Recent research suggests focusing on managerial roles in ICC, with an emphasis on understanding organizational culture, improvisation, listening, and addressing employee sensemaking (Adamu et al., 2023; Mazzei and Ravazzani, 2022; Strandberg and Vigso, 2016). Differentiating ICC strategies from external communication strategies is crucial for effective crisis management (Strandberg and Vigso, 2016). Enhancing managerial capabilities through knowledge transfer and capacity-building is essential for effective ICC (Tabatabai, 2019). The interconnection between managerial roles and ICC is distinctly important, broadening the concept of internal crisis communication and emphasizing its importance in modern organizational contexts.

Antecedents of internal crisis communication

Safety culture

Safety culture is a crucial element in crisis communication and management, as it significantly impacts an organization's ability

to effectively handle crises. De Wolf and Mejri (2013) and Ulmer et al. (2020) argue that organizations that neglect to cultivate a robust safety culture are more vulnerable to crises. The importance of maintaining a positive safety culture to prevent crises has been discussed by several scholars, including Meshkati (1998), Cox and Flin (1998), Wiegmann et al. (2004), Misnan and Mohammed (2007), Elziny and Mohamed (2020), and Bautista-Bernal et al. (2024). Since the term “safety culture” first emerged in 1986 following the Chernobyl accident, it has been widely implemented and discussed in various contexts, particularly in the safety industry (Shappell and Wiegmann, 2010).

In an organization context, safety culture encompasses the collective values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors regarding safety that are shared among employees and management. This concept is fundamental in creating a workplace environment where safety is prioritized and integrated into all aspects of operations. According to Guldenmund (2000), safety culture encompasses visible practices, procedures, and safety measures, as well as the underlying values and norms that influence how safety is perceived and enacted within the organization. A strong safety culture is marked by a high level of commitment to safety at all organizational levels, proactive safety management practices, and continuous learning and improvement in safety performance (Mirzaei Aliabadi et al., 2020; Reason, 1997).

Managers play a crucial role in fostering a robust safety culture by demonstrating a visible commitment to safety, engaging employees in safety-related discussions, and ensuring that safety policies are consistently applied and adhered to. Effective leadership in safety culture involves establishing clear safety expectations, empowering employees to take ownership of safety practices, and encouraging open communication about safety concerns (Cooper, 2016). Additionally, Schein (2010) emphasizes that a positive safety culture requires ongoing assessment and reinforcement, with organizations regularly evaluating their safety practices and making necessary adjustments to maintain high safety standards.

The interplay between safety culture and internal crisis communication (ICC) is crucial for organizational resilience and employee wellbeing. Communication practitioners need to understand the organization’s safety context and workflows (Sutcliffe, 2011). A strong safety culture supports an environment where safety-related information is shared openly, and employees can voice concerns without fear of retaliation (Cooper, 2016). This open communication climate is essential during crises, as it ensures that accurate and timely information is disseminated, reducing uncertainty and promoting trust.

Heide and Simonsson (2021) emphasize the critical role of safety culture in ICC. Managers who prioritize safety culture are more likely to employ comprehensive communication strategies that address both informational and emotional needs during a crisis. Effective safety culture involves proactive risk management and continuous improvement, which translates into well-prepared and responsive ICC practices (Reason, 1997). Moreover, a positive safety culture enhances the credibility and effectiveness of managerial communication during crises, as employees are more inclined to trust and act on information from leaders who have consistently demonstrated a commitment to safety (Schein, 2010).

Despite the established link between safety culture and ICC, there is still limited research specifically examining this relationship. Weick and Sutcliffe (2003) argue that safety culture practices are essential for avoiding potential while Mohamad et al. (2022a,b) found a positive relationship between safety culture and ICC, highlighting its effectiveness in enhancing communication during crises. Fernández-Muñiz et al. (2007) further emphasize the importance of managerial involvement in safety activities, underscoring that managerial commitment is a key indicator of a strong safety culture (Bisbey et al., 2021; Fernández-Muñiz et al., 2007; Bentley and Haslam, 2001). To better understand how safety culture and ICC intersect, future research should explore practical case studies and real-world applications. This would provide concrete examples of how safety culture influences ICC and identify strategies for improving crisis communication based on safety culture principles. Considering the relationship between safety culture and internal crisis communication, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1: There is a significant relationship between safety culture and internal crisis communication from a managerial perspective.

Work engagement

Work engagement in an organization refers to the level of enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption that employees exhibit toward their work tasks and roles. This concept is characterized by a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind and is often associated with high levels of energy, involvement, and a sense of efficacy (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Engaged employees are not only committed to their work but also invested in the success of the organization, displaying proactive behaviors and a willingness to exceed their job requirements (Bakker, 2022).

The role of managers is fostering work engagement by creating a supportive work environment that meets employees’ psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci and Ryan, 2017). This includes providing meaningful work, opportunities for growth and development, and recognition of achievements. Additionally, effective communication and leadership practices are essential for nurturing engagement, as they help build trust and a sense of belonging among employees (Mutha and Srivastava, 2023; Bakar et al., 2007; Kahn, 1990). When managers actively promote work engagement, it can lead to enhanced job performance, lower turnover rates, and overall organizational success (Naqshbandi et al., 2024; Harter et al., 2002).

Work engagement drives proactive work behavior, leading to numerous organizational advantages (Bakker and Bal, 2010). It also influences energy levels, mental resilience, and the investment of effort in work (Schaufeli et al., 2002). According to Bakker and Bal (2010), engaged employees demonstrate 21% higher commitment compared to their less engaged counterparts. Consequently, hiring employees who exhibit strong work engagement has become a priority for organizations (Ahmed et al., 2018). Corbeanu and Iliescu (2023) identify three main dimensions of work engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption.

From an internal communication perspective, effective communication involves the process of exchanging information within an organizational context (Mohamad et al., 2022a,b; Mishra et al., 2014). Internal communication enhances employee engagement by aligning individual performance with their roles (Saks, 2006). Moreover, it fosters strong emotional bonds, which in turn boost employee commitment and effort toward organizational success (Muhamad et al., 2023; Quirke, 2008; Kahn, 1990). Several studies indicate that robust internal communication motivates employees to deliver excellent customer service (Lowenstein, 2006). Brown and Treviño (2006) suggest that managerial actions significantly influence employee engagement, particularly through ethical communication practices (Sarwar et al., 2020).

The relationship between work engagement and internal crisis communication (ICC) is crucial from a managerial perspective, as effective communication strategies can significantly influence employees' engagement levels, especially during crises. Work engagement, characterized by high levels of enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption in work tasks (Schaufeli et al., 2002), thrives in environments where communication is transparent, consistent, and supportive. During a crisis, managers play a role in maintaining or even enhancing work engagement by ensuring that ICC practices address both the informational and emotional needs of employees (Demerouti and Bakker, 2023). However, it's important to note that research in this area has some limitations. For instance, most studies focus on large corporations, leaving a gap in our understanding of ICC in small and medium enterprises (Guo et al., 2020). Additionally, the impact of cultural differences on ICC effectiveness remains understudied (Guerber et al., 2020).

Effective ICC helps mitigate the uncertainty and anxiety that crises often bring, thereby supporting employees' psychological wellbeing and maintaining their engagement (Heide and Simonsson, 2021). When managers communicate clearly about the crisis situation, the steps being taken to address it, and the implications for employees, it helps build trust and a sense of security within the organization (Coombs, 2022). Furthermore, involving employees in the crisis response process and seeking their input can enhance their sense of ownership and commitment, which are key components of work engagement (Tao et al., 2022).

Additionally, managers who demonstrate empathy and provide emotional support through ICC can foster a resilient and motivated workforce. Resources such as supportive communication from leaders contribute to higher levels of engagement by reinforcing employees' sense of value and belonging (Schaufeli, 2021). Recent research, spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic, has highlighted the growing importance of digital communication tools in ICC. However, studies on their long-term impact on work engagement are still emerging and represent an important area for future research (Hakanen et al., 2021). Therefore, a strategic focus on ICC during crises not only helps manage the immediate situation but also sustains and potentially enhances work engagement, leading to better overall organizational performance. Given the relationship between work engagement and internal crisis communication, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2: There is a significant relationship between work engagement and internal crisis communication from a managerial perspective.

Leadership effectiveness

The effectiveness of leadership within an organization is fundamentally defined by the leaders' abilities to inspire and guide their followers toward fulfilling organizational goals. This effectiveness encompasses several dimensions, including the capacity to inspire and motivate employees, make strategic decisions, and cultivate a positive organization culture. Yukl and Gardner (2020) asserts that effective leadership not only achieves high performance and productivity but also ensure employee satisfaction and development. Leaders must adapt their styles to meet the needs of their team and the demands of the various situation (Northouse, 2021).

Key competencies of effective leaders include emotional intelligence, communication skills, and the ability to build strong relationships. Goleman (2000) emphasize that emotional intelligence—comprising self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—is a critical component of leadership effectiveness. It allows leaders to manage their emotions and influence others emotion effectively. Additionally, transformational leadership, which inspires and motivates employees through a shared vision and fosters an environment of trust and collaboration, is linked to higher organizational effectiveness (Helmold, 2021; Bass and Riggio, 2006).

Effective leadership also involve navigating complex challenges and driving organizational change. Kotter (2012) highlight those successful leaders manage change by creating a sense of urgency, developing a clear vision, and empowering employees to take action. They balance task-oriented and people-oriented behaviors to achieve organizational goals while maintaining a supportive and engaging work environment.

The role of leadership in crisis management has gain significant attention, particularly concerning ICC. Recent research underscores the crucial role play by the leader in managing crisis. Effective leadership influences ICC quality, guiding organization through crises and maintaining corporate sustainability (Wisittigars and Siengthai, 2019). Ineffective leadership during crises can impede corporate growth and sustainability (Fleming and Zhu, 2017). Organizational failures are often linked to insufficient vision and leadership competencies (Mendenhall et al., 2017).

Leaders' effectiveness directly impacts ICC, which is essential for managing uncertainty and maintaining trust within the organization (Coombs, 2022). Leaders must communicate clearly, consistently, and empathetically during crises. Transformational leaders, known for their ability to articulate a compelling vision and engage employees, excel in ICC by reinforcing organizational values and instilling confidence (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Northouse (2021) notes that these leaders engage in two-way communication, actively listening to employees and incorporating their feedback into decision-making processes, thereby enhancing resilience during crises.

Effective leaders also employ strategic ICC to align crisis responses with broader organizational objectives, ensuring proactive rather than reactive communication. Kotter (2012) emphasizes that leaders who excel in crisis management create a sense of urgency, communicate a clear vision, and empower employees to contribute to the response. This strategic approach mitigates the negative impacts of crises, maintains employee engagement, and drives recovery and growth.

Wisittigars and Siengthai (2019) identify crisis leadership competencies as crucial during crises. Enhancing organizational effectiveness in crisis management can be achieved through leadership development programs (Amagoh, 2009). Effective leadership is vital for organizational performance and competitive advantage (Kim, 2020), and failure to build a strong foundation of effective leadership can negatively impact growth (Baig et al., 2021; Bodinson, 2005). In light of the relationship between leadership effectiveness and internal crisis communication, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H3: There is a significant relationship between leadership effectiveness and internal crisis communication from managerial perspective.

The consequences of internal crisis communication

Perceived employee's commitment

Perceived employee commitment reflects the level of loyalty, engagement, and dedication employees feel toward their organization. This concept includes employees' emotional attachment, identification with organizational goals, and willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991). It is commonly measured through three components: affective commitment (emotional attachment), continuance commitment (recognition of the costs of leaving), and normative commitment (sense of obligation to stay; Meyer et al., 2002).

Affective commitment is particularly important as it signifies a genuine alignment between employees' personal values and the values of the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1996). Employees with high levels of affective commitment are more likely to exhibit positive work behaviors, such as higher job performance, lower turnover rates, and increased willingness to participate in discretionary activities (Tremblay, 2021). Managers can enhance perceived commitment by fostering a supportive environment, recognizing contributions, and ensuring that employees feel valued and connected to the organizational mission (Mowday et al., 2013).

Recent research highlights that effective communication, leadership, and professional development opportunities are key to enhancing perceived employee commitment. Employees who perceive organizational investment in their growth and wellbeing tend to reciprocate with increased commitment (Li and Lin, 2021; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). This underscores the need to integrate practical strategies for improving commitment, such as providing clear communication and development opportunities.

Employee commitment can be assessed by examining alignment with organizational objectives and goals. This alignment

fosters loyalty and retention (Orosa, 2023). Research shows that positive organizational energy and emotional connections can further enhance commitment (López-Cabarcos et al., 2015). During crises, employees' quality of work life and feelings of security can be adversely affected (Kim, 2020). However, commitment often strengthens post-crisis, indicating a strong psychological attachment to the organization (Jung et al., 2022; Messarra and Karkoulia, 2008).

The relationship between ICC and perceived employee commitment is critical for managers. Effective ICC during crises impacts employees' commitment perceptions significantly. Employees seek guidance, reassurance, and support from leaders during crises (Coombs, 2022). Transparent and empathetic communication fosters trust and confidence, thereby strengthening affective commitment (Ndlovu et al., 2021).

When managers communicate openly about the crisis, share relevant information, and involve employees in decision-making processes, it enhances employees' sense of belonging and loyalty to the organization (Heide and Simonsson, 2021). Employees who feel heard and valued are more likely to exhibit higher levels of commitment (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Effective ICC can mitigate the negative impact of crises on employee morale and job satisfaction, thereby preserving and even enhancing perceived commitment (Mazzei and Ravazzani, 2022).

Furthermore, managers who prioritize ICC demonstrate their commitment to employee wellbeing and organizational success, which reinforces normative commitment—a sense of obligation to remain with the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1996). Consistent communication of organizational values, goals, and support for during crises reinforce the reciprocal relationship between organizational support and perceived commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991).

Recent studies suggest that affective commitment varies across cultural contexts, with stronger manifestations among employees from collectivist cultures due to fair practices and positive work experiences (Malla and Malla, 2023). This indicates the importance of culturally informed approaches to enhancing employee commitment. Given this relationship, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H4: There is a positive relationship between perceived employee commitment and internal crisis communication from a managerial perspective.

Perceived organizational performance

Perceived organizational performance encompasses employees' subjective judgments regarding their organization's overall effectiveness, success, and attainment of goals. This includes dimensions such as financial performance, operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, innovation, and social responsibility (Pettigrew et al., 1992). While objective indicators are important, employees' experiences, interactions, and interpretations within the organization also play a critical role in shaping these perceptions.

Employees' perceptions of organizational performance are shaped by their observations of organizational practices, leadership behaviors, and communication processes (Cameron and Quinn,

2011). Positive experiences such as effective leadership, clear communication, opportunities for growth, and recognition of achievements contribute to higher perceptions of organizational performance. Conversely, negative experiences such as poor leadership, ineffective communication, lack of support, and perceived unfairness can lower employees' perceptions of organizational performance. Addressing the limitations of existing literature, there is a need for more research into how specific organizational practices directly impact employee perceptions.

Managers are important in shaping these perceptions by fostering a positive work environment, providing adequate resources and support, and clearly communicating organizational goals and expectations (Pimenta et al., 2024; Cameron and Quinn, 2011). Aligning organizational strategies with employees' needs and values can significantly enhance perceptions of performance and contribute to overall success. However, more recent studies are needed to explore the impact of evolving managerial practices on perceived performance.

Organizational performance is an important indicator valued by employees to measure the organization's success. Camilleri and Van der Heijden (2007) highlight that employee's observations of overall performance greatly affect their perceptions. Berberoglu (2018) emphasizes the importance of comparing these perceptions with competitors to better understand employees' attitudes. Bilderback (2023) and Berberoglu and Secim (2015) identify success, sustainability, and development as critical areas of focus in measuring perceived organizational performance.

The link between ICC and perceived organizational performance is important. Effective ICC can significantly influence employees' views on organizational effectiveness and success during crises (Coombs, 2022). During such times, employees rely on transparent and timely communication to feel supported and engaged (Heide and Simonsson, 2015). Research indicates that effective ICC build trust, reduces uncertainty, and maintains employee morale, which are essential for maintaining performance during challenging times (Heide and Simonsson, 2021). Therefore, recent studies should further explore how ICC impacts long-term perceptions of organizational performance.

When managers communicate openly and effectively during crises, it not only helps manage the immediate situation but also shapes employees' perceptions of organizational performance in the long term. Research suggests that employees who perceive that their organization communicates well during crises are more likely to have positive perceptions of overall organizational performance (Coombs, 2022). Effective ICC demonstrates organizational resilience, adaptability, and commitment to employee wellbeing, which are indicators of organizational performance (Heide and Simonsson, 2021).

Moreover, ICC also offer an opportunity for managers to reinforce organizational values, engage employees in problem-solving, and demonstrate leadership effectiveness—all of which contribute to employees' perceptions of organizational performance (Cameron and Quinn, 2011). Maintaining open channels of communication, soliciting employee feedback, and providing support during crises can bolster employees' confidence in the organization's ability to overcome challenges and achieve its goals, thus positively impacting perceived organizational performance (Anani-Bossman et al., 2024;

Allen et al., 2003). Future research should examine how these practices impact both immediate and long-term perceptions of organizational performance.

This perception serves as a reflection actual performance (Berberoglu, 2018). Mullins (2010) discusses the direct impact of human resources management practices on employees' attitudes. During crises, organizational performance is significantly affected (Seles et al., 2019). Existing studies highlight a notable relationship between crises and organizational performance (Aljuhmani et al., 2024; Udofia et al., 2021; Malinen et al., 2019). This study will consider perceived organizational performance from the perspective of managers, focusing on their views of the organization's performance and growth.

H5: There is a positive relationship between perceived organizational performance and internal crisis communication from a managerial perspective.

Proposed theoretical framework

The extensive review of literatures done despite the conceptual framework as shown in Figure 1.

The proposed conceptual framework that is derived from the extensive literature can be empirically tested using qualitative methods to ensure robust validation of its constructs. To achieve this, conducting an interview or focus group with the managers is recommended. This qualitative approach will help to reassess the dimensionality of the ICC constructs and examine the antecedents, such as safety culture, work engagement and leadership effectiveness and the consequences of firm's performance and employee's commitment from the managerial perspective. For instance, qualitative interviews can explore how safety culture influences managerial perceptions of crisis communication, while focus groups can provide insights into how leadership effectiveness and work engagement impact organizational performance and employee commitment. Additionally, this phase will aid in the validation and development of measurement instruments, enhancing their robustness for future quantitative research. By refining these instruments based on qualitative findings, researchers can improve the accuracy and reliability of measurements used in subsequent quantitative studies. This process ensures that the constructs within the framework are not only theoretically sound but also practically applicable and validated from the perspective of those directly involved in crisis management and organizational performance. Such a comprehensive approach will strengthen the framework's empirical foundation, allowing for more precise and effective testing and application in future research (Northouse, 2021).

Underpinning theory: Situational Crisis Communication Theory

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), developed by Coombs (2007), provides a framework for understanding how organizations can effectively manage and communicate during

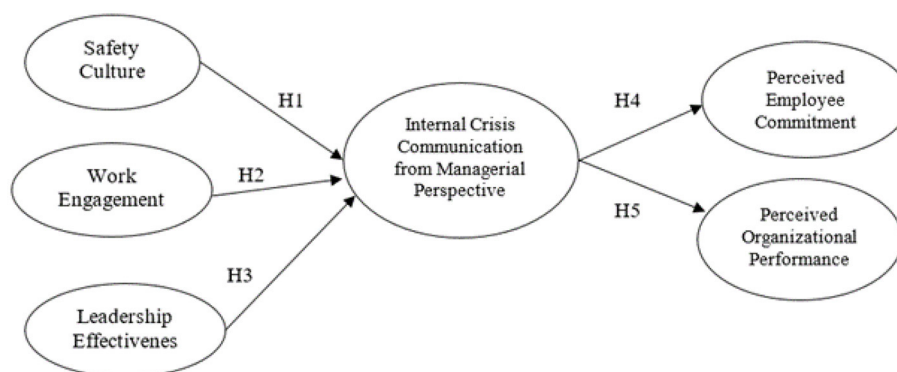


FIGURE 1
The proposed theoretical framework.

crises. In the context of research exploring the antecedents (i.e., safety culture, work engagement, and leadership effectiveness) and consequences (i.e., perceived organizational performance and employee commitment) of internal crisis communication from a managerial viewpoint, SCCT offers valuable insights. SCCT posits that the nature of the crisis and the organization's response significantly influence stakeholders' perceptions and, consequently, the outcomes of the crisis communication efforts.

Safety culture can be measured qualitatively through interviews and focus groups with employees and managers, assessing perceptions of organizational safety practices, communication protocols, and crisis preparedness. This approach aligns with SCCT's emphasis on proactive measures and pre-crisis communication strategies (Coombs, 2007). Work engagement is operationalized by evaluating employees' motivation, commitment, and involvement in their work through surveys and interviews, which gauge their enthusiasm and participation, influencing their receptivity to crisis communication (Mueller, 2024). Leadership effectiveness is assessed using 360-degree feedback, interviews, and surveys to evaluate leaders' abilities to communicate clearly, reduce uncertainty, and build trust during crises, as SCCT suggests that effective leaders support organizational stability and employee trust (Coombs and Holladay, 2023).

For the consequences, perceived organizational performance is measured by stakeholder perceptions of organizational competence and reliability through surveys and feedback mechanisms. SCCT posits that transparent and timely crisis communication enhances these perceptions, thereby improving perceived performance (Coombs, 2022). Employee commitment is assessed by measuring loyalty and engagement levels, particularly in response to internal crisis communication that addresses concerns and demonstrates organizational support. Effective crisis communication reinforces organizational support and responsiveness, leading to increased commitment (Sun et al., 2023; Mishra et al., 2014). SCCT directly informs these linkages by demonstrating how antecedents like safety culture, work engagement, and leadership effectiveness influence crisis communication and, in turn, how such communication impacts perceived organizational performance and employee commitment. Aligning communication strategies with the specific crisis type and stakeholder expectations is crucial

for achieving positive outcomes, as emphasized by SCCT. Thus, SCCT provides a robust theoretical foundation for understanding and improving internal crisis communication strategies (Coombs and Holladay, 2023; Coombs, 2022, 2007).

Conclusion

This research offers significant theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, this study advances the understanding of how ICC is shaped by organizational factors and leadership dynamics through the lens of SCCT (Coombs, 2022). By integrating SCCT with constructs such as safety culture, work engagement, and leadership effectiveness, this study enhances the theoretical framework and provides a nuanced understanding of how these antecedents influence crisis communication strategies. The research also contributes to the literature by highlighting the mediating role of internal crisis communication in linking these antecedents to key organizational outcomes like perceived performance and employee commitment. This underscores the long-term impact of effective crisis communication on organizational resilience beyond immediate crisis resolution (Mizrak, 2024). Practically, the study offers actionable insights for managers and organizational leaders. It underscores the importance of cultivating a robust safety culture, which is essential for mitigating crisis impacts and enhancing resilience (Saks, 2006). Additionally, the findings suggest that fostering high levels of employee engagement is crucial for effective crisis management, as engaged employees are more responsive to crisis communication. The study also highlights the pivotal role of leadership effectiveness; leaders who demonstrate transparency, empathy, and decisiveness can significantly influence employee perceptions and reactions during crises, ultimately improving organizational performance and commitment (Monternel et al., 2023). These insights support the development of leadership training programs aimed at preparing leaders for effective crisis management. In conclusion, this research offers valuable contributions by elucidating the interplay between safety culture, work engagement, and leadership effectiveness in internal crisis communication. It provides a comprehensive framework for

analyzing these constructs and offers practical strategies for enhancing organizational performance and employee commitment during crises. Future research should explore these constructs in different organizational contexts to further validate and refine the framework. Additionally, studies could investigate the long-term effects of crisis communication on organizational resilience and employee engagement. This research provides a robust foundation for understanding organizational crises and developing effective communication strategies (Islam, 2023).

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Author contributions

AH: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. BM: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. AI: Writing – review & editing.

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Conflict of interest

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Internal crisis communication: exploring antecedents and consequences from a managerial viewpoint

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Abstract

Over the past decade, internal crisis communication (ICC) has experienced significant advancements and transformations due to various factors, including technological developments, changing communication landscapes, and the increasing need for effective crisis management within organizations. Crises have impacted organizations differently worldwide, placing management under tremendous pressure to communicate their decisions to employees and provide encouraging messages amidst the uncertainty. Based on prior theoretical and empirical research, this paper explores the cause-and-effect relationships between the antecedents of internal crisis communication and their consequences from a managerial perspective in the workplace. This research proposes a new conceptual framework that integrates multiple key factors in internal crisis communication, offering a comprehensive approach to studying the interplay between antecedents and consequences. The

framework specifically examines how three antecedents—safety culture, work engagement, and leadership effectiveness—influence and interact with two consequences: perceived organizational performance and employee commitment. By synthesizing these diverse elements into a cohesive model, this framework contributes to the literature on internal crisis communication in several ways. First, it enables the examination of both direct and indirect relationships between antecedents and consequences, potentially revealing new insights into the complexities of crisis communication dynamics. Second, it provides a structured approach for future empirical studies to test and validate these relationships in various organizational contexts. Lastly, it offers a research agenda to advance the study of internal crisis communication, aiding both academics and practicing managers in developing strategies to mitigate uncertainty during crises. Copyright © 2024 Hamid, Mohamad and Ismail.

Author keywords

internal crisis communication; leadership effectiveness; managerial; safety culture; work engagement

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