

**CRISIS COMMUNICATION AND STAKEHOLDERS'  
EXPECTATIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF  
PUBLIC RELATIONS IN ORGANISATIONS**

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**Abstract**

This paper examines crisis communication and management from the perspective of public relations. It also assesses types, causes, attributes, elements, stages, template and plan for crisis management as well as issues management, preventive strategies of crisis, elements of crisis communication and the expectations of the stakeholders of the organisation during crisis. Primary and secondary research methodologies were employed. The study found that the expectations of the stakeholders during crisis are different and the expectations are determined by the interests of the specific stakeholder. While the customers want the organisations to tell them the truth about the crisis and ways to prevent future occurrences, the media expects that the organisations allow them to interrogate the crisis and interview the other parties for their sides of the crisis. However, the media and customers agree that the public relations practitioners in organisations

do not really evaluate their relationships with them and further study is recommended in this area.

**Key words:** Crisis communication, Crisis management, Issues management, Public relations, Stakeholders' expectations.

## INTRODUCTION

Public relations is a management function where every organisation expects the function and its managers to contribute meaningfully to its operations. However, the practice in Nigeria has not attained the status of management function (Adamolekun and Ekundayo, 2002; Nwanne, 2016). This is so as the practitioners in organisations were usually not relied upon by their organisations (Olatunji, 2008) in times of crisis. Most of the organisations rely on outsiders during such critical periods. Many of these organisations complain of not getting strategic inputs from the in-house practitioners (Onsongo, Mberia, and Jjuuko, 2017) which is borne out of the fact that the practitioners are usually not on top of the expectations of their critical stakeholders during crisis as many of them do not research or evaluate their operations and relationships with these stakeholders (Oso, 2008). It is for this that organisations regard public relations as a related function (Onono, 1992).

It is important for public relations practitioners in Nigeria to live up to expectations as developed countries, that Nigeria wants to join in 2050 according to the government of President Muhammadu Buhari, put a big premium on public relations. It is not surprising that the immediate-past Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Nick Clegg is the present head of global affairs and communications at Facebook (Murphy, 2020). Public relations plays strategic roles and

contributes positively to bottomlines of organisations in other countries as submitted by Kykanloo, Ma'atoofi, Ahmadian, Abadi, Mallaei, Taheranpur, and Shirzadi (2012), and PIELLE Consulting, United Kingdom.

In their work, Kykanloo *et al* (2012) found that there was a significant relationship between public relations and the amount of life assurance policies sold in Iran. They also found that the amount of life assurance cover is significantly related to organisation's good reputation and confidence; positive attitudes of customers toward organisation; communications, thoughts measurement and crisis management. PIELLE Consulting, London, UK on its website says “public relations helps organisations deliver better outcomes”. However, this has not materialised in Nigeria.

## STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Many public relations practitioners are found wanting during crisis time. This is because they do not have forethought of what are expected of them by their stakeholders especially the media (print, broadcast, online, community and social media) and customers during this critical period when every second counts. This problem has made many corporate bodies not to place public relations practitioners in the management cadre though public relations is said to be a management function. This is evident in the society as many public relations practitioners do not even have the opportunity of discussing issues in their offices talk less of deciding the way forward for their organisations (Nwanne, 2016).

This situation is not helped as limited research on crisis management and communication in public relations has examined the expectation of these critical stakeholders (media and customers) during crisis management (Bundy, Pfarrer, Short and Coombs, 2017; Coombs, 2014; and Wang and Dong 2017). This paper is positioned to provide solution to this problem for public relations practitioners and fill this gap. Also, it will enrich the literature of crisis management

and communication with the expectations of the media and customers of organisations during a crisis.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of this study are to:

1. ascertain the crisis communication expectations of the media from an organisation during crisis management time.
2. find out the crisis communication expectations of the customers of an organisation.
3. investigate the degree of the research of corporate organisations into their relationships with stakeholders (media and customers).

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research questions are as follows:

1. what are the crisis communication expectations of the media from an organisation during crisis?
2. what are the crisis communication expectations of the customers of an organisation?
3. what is the degree of the research of corporate organisations into their relationships with stakeholders (media and customers)?

## **CONCEPTUAL REVIEW**

Crisis is a normal occurrence in the life of an organisation or even an individual or a country; it is inevitable (Adamolekun and Ekundayo, 2002). Crisis is the case when things go against the norm or that which is expected and no organisation is crisis-free. Crisis can be further defined as an abnormal change in the path of a cause. The ability to control a moment of great danger for success is known as crisis management (Ogedengbe, 2004). Taneja, Pryor, Sewell and Recuero (2014) define crisis as a series of unforeseen events that

launch a group, team or an organisation into a downward spiral that is quick and will have long term effects if the situation is not rapidly handled effectively and efficiently. Hermann (1972) cited in Taneja *et al.* (2014, p. 78) argues that a crisis is a “situation that incorporates the following three conditions: (a) a surprise (b) a threat to high-priority goals, and (c) a restricted amount of time available for response”.

In all types of organisations from the wealthiest empires to the “mom and pop” stores, crises occur and decision makers must be ready to act fast when they occur (Taneja *et al.*, 2014, p. 78). Crisis can be caused by many factors in an organisation. Dunne (1990) cited in Ajala (1993) lists eleven factors that can lead to crisis. Top among them are industrial relations as evidenced by strikes, market changes which may be caused by technology, product failure, managerial incompetence, regulation and deregulation especially with capital base increment as happened in the Nigerian banking and insurance industries, impact of world events such as COVID-19, financial difficulty which may be caused by economic recession, outside attack, misdemeanor, sabotage and environmental conflict as is usually the case of oil producing companies in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria.

Crisis communication as used in this study refer to the exchange of details pertaining to an unexpected situation at a point in time while crisis management as used in this study refers to all the efforts activated to ensure that an unexpected situation is brought under control.

Stakeholders in this study refer to the media and customers. The media according to Olatunji (2019) are significant parts of agencies of socialisation that provide education, information, cultural orientation, entertainment, escape and fun to members in the society. The media used in this study are print, broadcast, online, community and social media. Customers on the other hand are the people that get utility and

satisfaction from organisations with the payment of consideration usually in monetary terms.

### **Types, Elements and Stages of Crisis**

Black (1989) identifies two types of crisis. These are known unknown and unknown unknown. Known unknown is the type of crisis that is known or particular to an organisation or an industry. But the time it will occur is unknown. For example, plane crash is peculiar to the aviation industry but no one knows exactly when it will happen. The same for network failure for the telecommunication industry. Unknown unknown is the crisis that is unknown to a particular organisation or industry and the time it will occur is also unknown. However, whenever an unknown unknown crisis occurs that particular crisis becomes known unknown for the future.

Salu (1994) underlines four elements of a crisis. These four elements are trigger, threat, uncontrolled situation and urgent action needed. A trigger is an unexpected action with the potential of causing crisis for an organisation e.g. an insurance policy holder (customer) refusing to sign the discharge voucher for the settlement of his claim. It becomes an issue that must be managed. A threat is the consequence of the trigger. The insurance company's manager must follow up the trigger so that it does not threaten the survival of the company thereby proactively managing the potential crisis. This can be done by inviting the policy holder to a meeting and explain how the insurance company arrived at the amount of claim through the dictates of the insurance contract. This can occur especially if the policy goes with an excess. That is, the insurance company will only pay claim if it is in excess of a particular amount (Ogedengbe, 2019).

Nevertheless, every crisis comes with a latent power for the organisation to improve its activities, operations and profits. So, such latent power must be identified quickly and worked upon to restore the glory of the company. Consequently, if after a crisis, the particular company does not do better to what it was doing before the crisis, the

crisis was not well managed and the company should return to the drawing board to activate the latent power/opportunity for better/improved performances.

Nkwocha (2004) refers to stages of crisis as crisis life cycle. These stages according to Ajala (1993) are divided into three. These are pre-crisis stage, crisis stage, and post-crisis stage. The pre-crisis stage is a time of no crisis. Here, the public relations manager should ensure that all acts that could lead to crisis are checked. At the same time, the template for crisis management is drawn so that it becomes handy at the crisis stage. The public relations practitioner also engages publics and stakeholders well at the pre-crisis stage. Also a question and answer like a hymnbook should be prepared so that everybody in the organisation says the same thing to the people and the media. This should be well rehearsed. This may become handy at the crisis stage. The crisis stage is the stage where the template developed at the pre-crisis stage is employed. Post-crisis stage is the period of evaluation. What lessons are learnt? Future occurrences must be prevented. This is the period of identifying and implementing the latent opportunity for improved performances for the organisation that experienced the crisis.

### **Template and Plan for Crisis Management**

Every organisation must have a template of managing a crisis. Such may include a committee that is set up for the task. Appointment of spokesperson for crisis is another task that the template must cater for. This may be the CEO and/or the Public Relations Manager or the expert whose field was where the crisis emanated from. The first voice advantage is very important and it should be well placed in the crisis management and communication template. When there are no crises, the template should be tested for mastering and fine tuning. Proactive engagement at pre-crisis stage with publics and stakeholders is essential. This underlines the position of Nkwocha (2004) that crisis management is proactive, preventive and pre-planned in nature. He

adds that crisis management is an effective public relations strategy to ensure peace and good image in an organisation, society or government.

Otto Lerbinger cited in Dougall, Burke and Feldman (2004) gives an eight-point plan that public relations manager should adopt when developing crisis management template. These are:

1. Inform the house management of the issue and of the potential crisis/danger that may occur.
2. Activate a crisis team that is fully trained and prepared to deal with such issues.
3. Notify relevant authorities that have a vested interest in the crisis.
4. Notify employees, and other target publics that could be affected by the crisis and of the danger that might occur as a result of the situation.
5. Obtain thorough facts that give all the information. These can be used for media statement and help ascertain the seriousness of the position.
6. Establish a crisis centre close to the action.
7. Appoint a media spokesperson who is properly trained in media questioning techniques and who is fully briefed on the crisis.
8. Disclose all information honestly and quickly. This is as posited by Ivy Leadbetter Lee in 1906 during the Anthracite Coal Roads and Mine Company industrial crisis in America. Lee submitted that he must be empowered to tell the people nothing but the whole fact for the crisis communication, if he thought it necessary to do so and this led to his Declaration of Principles to the media (Black, 1989).

## **Issues Management and Preventive Strategies of Crisis**

Issues management is the panacea for crisis management. What is issues management? Issues management is a pro-active approach to identifying concern or issue that currently faces an organisation or will be faced in the near future by the organisation, say in the next one to three years. Issues management encompasses dealing with the issues identified with the intention of enhancing the image, credibility, reputation of the organisation, preserving the markets and managing the crises before they occur. A case that arises for discussion with the possibility of having an effect on an organisation is called an issue (Oyekola, 2003). The art of issues management requires awareness analysis of the causes and effects of the issues, a plan of action and monitoring of the result to determine how the plan has fared. Awareness involves knowing happenings and trends and their implications to the organisation and the society at large. Whenever issues are managed competently and professionally, though it may not completely prevent crisis, it certainly mitigates the negative effect.

Prevention is better than cure is a popular position. Proactiveness in public relations is key (Nkwocha, 2004). It should be noted that public relations cannot carve a rotten wood (Odigbo, 2007 cited in Nwodu, Bel-Molokwu and Aliede, 2014). The public relations manager should ensure that all acts that could lead to crisis are checked at the pre-crisis stage. The publics and stakeholders of the organisation must be engaged very well. Different causes or issues that can lead to crisis had been identified earlier. With these causes/issues, how do you prevent crisis?

For industrial relations, labour must be well engaged and their welfare should be given adequate attention. This will also work to prevent product failure. Market trends should be monitored in order to be above market changes, minimise effects of world events on the operations of the organisation, check sabotage and outside attack. The environmental should be scanned in order to be aware of regulations

changes through regulatory affairs which is a key function of public relations. Competent hands must be employed for management as this will check managerial incompetence, financial difficulty, misdemeanour and environmental conflicts.

### **Elements of Crisis Communication**

Crisis communication is the exchange of details pertaining to an unexpected situation at a point in time between an organisation and its publics and stakeholders. It is the dissemination of information and facts to the publics and stakeholders of an organisation during crisis. Elements of crisis communication are three (The 3Fs). These are:

1. **First voice advantage:** The company managing a crisis must be the one to first tell the world of the crisis at hand. The organisation must set the agenda and frame how the crisis will be reported by the media. This is a critical proactive tactic of crisis management and communication.
2. **Focus on victims/publics/stakeholders:** The focus of the communication from the organisation must be the victims/publics/stakeholders. This will assure the society that the organisation cares for the victims/publics/stakeholders rather than just for profit or surplus maximisation. It will also latently tell the society that the organisation has nothing to hide. A very important perception at the time of crisis. All traits of misperception should be curtailed.
3. **Fight misinformation:** During crisis, many unsubstantiated messages are in the public sphere especially on the social media. The company must ensure that all misinformation, if any, are defeated with facts.

Adamolekun, Ogedengbe and Pratt (2012) submit six-point recipe while Astbury (2019) gives a five-point recipe for crisis

communication. To Adamolekun *et al* (2012), these are build trust in every facet of the stakeholder experience, emphasise ethics in the workplace and in all communication, expose crisis communication practitioners to applied ethics, elevate strategic action to communicative action, emphasise cause marketing as a promotional device for the corporate brand, and determine communication outcomes and apply results in subsequent programmes.

The five points of Astbury (2019) are, firstly, you need to communicate quickly usually in the first 15 minutes of being aware of the crisis. reaching the publics and stakeholders quickly. Secondly, any information you issue must be 100 per cent accurate. Thirdly, you must be consistent in your communication to all publics and stakeholders. Fourthly, in order to get your crisis communication right you need to prepare in advance because you cannot wait until a crisis hits before you decide how to handle the communication. Fifthly, compile a list of contact numbers and think in advance who would need to be kept informed.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The four models of public relations by Grunig and Hunt underpins this study. According to Grunig and Hunt (1984) cited in Oliver (2006), the four models of public relations are press agency/publicity model, public information model, two-way asymmetric model, and two-way symmetric model.

The press agency/publicity model communicates one way where complete truth may not be essential. It is from the source to the receiver. It is usually for the purpose of propaganda. Nature of research activity in this model is little. The second model, public information model is also one-way communication but truth is important. The purpose here is for the dissemination of information usually from the source to the receiver. Like the press

agency/publicity model, nature of research activity in this model is also little. The third model, two-way asymmetrical model communicates two ways but with imbalanced effects. It is a model of scientific persuasion from the source to the receiver with a feedback to the source.

Research under this model is formative and to evaluate attitudes. The fourth model, two-way symmetrical model communicates two ways with balanced effect. It is for the purpose of mutual understanding. The communication is between groups (from group I to group II and from group II to group I). Research activity under this model is also formative such as under the two-way asymmetrical model only that it is for the evaluation of understanding as against the evaluation of attitudes under the two-way asymmetrical model. This model is the ideal model for public relations practice. Public relations practitioners must strive to ensure that there is a balanced two-way communication between them and their stakeholders including the media and the customers. This will ensure a mutual understanding for a win-win situation. The thrust of this paper is to bring about this win-win situation especially during crisis time.

### **Empirical Review**

Wang and Dong (2017) in their study that employed desk research methodology found that social media is a critical tool of crisis management and communication. They also examined the role of social media in crisis communication which focused on product tampering and general crisis. However, their study did not research into the crisis communication expectations of the stakeholders from the public relations manager managing a crisis.

As the previous duo, Bundy *et al.*, (2017) have also not researched into the crisis communication expectations of the stakeholders from the public relations manager managing a crisis. This

makes this gap in knowledge to be obvious yawning for filling. Bundy *et al.*, (2017) examine the integration, interpretation and research development of crisis and crisis management through desk research and identified two primary perspectives on crisis management. These are focus on the internal dynamics of a crisis and a focus on managing the external stakeholders.

Evidence and bleeding edge of the state of crisis communication in the United States of America are the thrust of Coombs (2014). The author provides guidance for crisis communicators by pointing out what researchers have found to be the most effective crisis communication practices. He also identifies the bleeding edge of crisis communication research which he submits is driven by the public relations practitioners (crisis communicators) who are faced with changing concerns such as the role of social media channels in crisis communication. Also, the study did not research into the crisis communication expectations of the stakeholders from the public relations manager managing a crisis.

Strategic crisis management: a basis for renewal and crisis prevention is the topic of Taneja *et al.*, (2014). They submit that the leaders of any organisation managing crisis must carry out some tasks. These are that they should have an executable crisis management plan (template) and communicate during and after crisis. A properly executed, efficient and effective strategic crisis management plan can lead to organisation renewal, stability, and growth after crisis situations and events as well as prevention of crisis recurrence, they found. Despite being important, crisis communication expectations of stakeholders have fewer research inputs from researchers as the above empirical (literature) review shows. This work will add to the literature in this area and fill the identified gap.

## METHOD

This study employed exploratory sequential design, a mixed method. In-depth interview method (qualitative methodology) and survey method (quantitative methodology) were used by the researchers. The mixed method integrated the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to triangulate data and this enhanced the comprehension of the issue under study. This, noted Creswell (2009), was because all methods have limitations and it is the belief of researchers that biases inherent in any single method could neutralise or cancel the biases of other methods. Secondary data were also obtained from the literature.

In-depth interview is thoroughly asking the respondent relevant questions on a subject-matter deeply, painstakingly, meticulously and in details. In-depth interviews were conducted with six media practitioners across print, broadcast, online, community and social media on their crisis communication expectations from the public relations manager of an organisation managing a crisis. The researchers stopped at the sixth interviewee when responses from the sixth interviewee were not different from the responses of the initial five. As such, the saturation point was reached at the sixth respondent.

The maximal variation sampling technique was employed in selecting the samples in print, broadcast, online, community and social media. This is theoretical sampling. Flick (2014) notes that qualitative research (in-depth interview) employs theoretical sampling as against statistical sampling used in quantitative research. Theoretical sampling is the case where the researcher is not set out to get views of a higher number of respondents in order to generalise to the population but to get a saturated view in order to generalise to a theory (Flick, 2014).

Survey research method through the questionnaire was adopted for the quantitative research. This is because the population of customers of organisations was large and scattered across Nigeria.

With this scenario, survey method (through questionnaire) is the appropriate quantitative method as the instrument can be sent across the entire population without the need of face-to-face meeting with the respondents. Sobowale (2008, p. 27) says survey “involves drawing up of a set of questions on various subjects or on various aspects of a subject to which selected members of a population are requested to react.”

Buttressing survey, Babbie (1990) cited in Creswell (2009) notes that the survey research method offers a quantitative or numerical explanation of trends, attitudes or opinion of a population by studying a sample of that population. The sample selection method was purposive sampling method and sample size of 400 was determined through the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) technique. For any defined population, Krejcie and Morgan (1970, p. 607) note “that as the population increases the sample size increases at a diminishing rate and remains relatively constant at slightly more than 380 cases.” Thus 400 which is higher than 380 was the used sample size. The samples, as noted above, were determined through purposive sampling method.

Instrumentation for qualitative research through in-depth interview was interview guide. Data collection procedure was through telephone, face-to-face, WhatsApp text and video engagement. The data analysis method was thematic analysis (themes) method of qualitative data presentation. For the survey, the instrument used was the questionnaire and it was field and online administered. Of the 400 administered questionnaires, 255 copies were retrieved representing 63.75 per cent return rate. Of the 255 copies, 244 copies were found usable representing 61 per cent of the administered copies of the questionnaire and 95.68 per cent of the retrieved copies of the questionnaire. Simple percentage was used in the analysis of the survey.

## DATA AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The names of the respondents of the in-depth interview were not disclosed as they did not give approval to the disclosure of their names in the work. Results of the qualitative phase are presented before that of the quantitative phase.

**Research Question: what are the crisis communication expectations of the media from an organisation during crisis management time?**

**Theme: Crisis communication expectations of the media.**

The organisation should carry the media along and state its side of the story. The organisation may admit wrongdoing and seek assistance in the presentation of its own side of the story. If need be, site visit might be provided to enhance telling the story. The organisation should also not be antagonistic of the media to talk to the other side especially the victims or those at the receiving end of the crisis. The CEO should also be accessible for interview on the crisis as this may even be the starting point. This is in line with the submission of Taneja *et al.*, (2014). The company process especially its mode of operations should also be made open to the media for thorough understanding of the background to the crisis and to shape the representation of the company in line with its public relations by extolling the corporate virtues of the organisation and balance the story.

Furthermore, the company should tell the media “nothing but the truth. The whole truth”, said one of the respondents. By implication, the media expect the company to narrate to it “what exactly transpired”, the respondent submit. The company is also expected to agree to professional advice from the media as a function of the business environment or the community. It is also an expectation

from the media for the organisation in crisis management time to communicate what is being done to prevent re-occurrence.

Apart from telling the media its perspectives of the crisis, the media expect the company to narrate the details of the crisis in terms of the source of the crisis, if the company is in charge of the crisis management and also measures being put in place to handle the ugly situation, who will be affected and who is responsible and whether it will “lead to lay-off of staff or sack, suspension of official. Any timelines or deadlines to turn things around” are other expectations according to another respondent.

Though the company “has a responsibility to put out a credible statement on the challenges being faced” it is the duty of the media to probe beyond what they are told, said another of the respondents. A journalist on the social media platform said the crisis communication activities of any organisation during crisis management should make use of the social media platforms like facebook which provides the organisation the platform to reach many people and also unlimited space to explain its position including uploading video and pictures. Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp among others should also be used “to take actions and prevent things going out of hand.”

The respondent continues that the organisation should make use of these social media platforms and adds that “gone are the days when you wait for NTA 9 O’clock news or till the following day for newspapers to publish your press release.” Other expectations from the media include that the organisation must own up and take ownership fast. The organisation should not go over the top unnecessarily, be honest, authentic, and take blame when applicable and be transparent to avoid further backlash, get discussion out of public eyes, do not attempt to silence your stakeholders, show gratitude, and great care should be taken before posting on the social media platforms.

Another journalist submit that he would essentially expect the same response from a company or organisation whether he works as a journalist in print, online or broadcast media. He continues that the first thing would be for the company/organisation to react quickly and acknowledge the crisis. They could do this by putting out public statements on their website and on social media. Ideally, they would also reach out to the media via a press conference and interviews with (select) media houses. They would need to do this to get the point across that they realise what the problem is and that they are trying to fix it. The worst thing, from the company's viewpoint, would be if the impression was created that it was in denial or trying to downplay the crisis.

He adds “ideally, the company would also express remorse for the crisis and its victims. When they don't, that creates an impression of arrogance. I think that Boeing, as an example, didn't do enough to show remorse for the recent airline crash in Ethiopia, which seems to have worsened its image among the publics.”

If the crisis is ongoing over a long period, the company must give regular updates. That is essential. It should avoid the impression that it is trying to hide information or that it does not feel it is necessary to let the media and public know. This is in line with Bundy *et al.*, (2017). Over time, the company should show that it has learnt from the crisis -- there should be tangible examples of this that it can present to the media, he submits.

**Research Question: what is the degree of the research of corporate organisations into their relationships with stakeholders (media and customers)?**

**Theme: Organisations' media research.**

All the respondents said that the organisation hardly ask them questions about their relationships. While they said such research is expected from the organisation in an informal way, it hardly happened. The journalists said such activity is “occasionally”, “seldom”, and “never”. In terms of the percentage of the organisations that do not research into their relationship with the media, the common percentage given by the respondents is 90 per cent. However, on critical examination of organisations research into their media relationships, one of the respondents said “Nope” (not on planet earth).

### **Quantitative Data**

**Research Question: what are the crisis communication expectations of the customers of an organisation?**

The customers were asked the question: what do you expect a company to tell you during the time the company is going through crisis? Choose as many as applicable of the following statements.

Their responses, analysed in percentages, are detailed in the table below:

S/N	Statements	Strongly Agree + Agree (%)	Strongly Disagree + Disagree (%)	Not Sure (%)
A	Tell me the truth about the crisis	86.065	8.196	5.739
B	Control the news by issuing a statement	79.918	16.803	3.279
C	Say nothing and allow the crisis to fade away	12.295	79.098	8.607
D	Do not take responsibility in their communications	16.393	65.983	17.624
E	Communicate their sympathy to the victims, if any	83.377	10.245	6.378
F	Tell me about compensation to the victims	61.885	22.950	15.165
G	Tell me what they are doing to forestall future occurrence	65.573	15.163	19.264

**Table 1: Responses of the customers on their crisis communication expectations from organisations using the Likert Scale Five-Point Technique**

Majority of the respondents (86.065 per cent) agreed that the company must tell the truth about the crisis. Majority (79.918 per cent) also agreed that the organisation is expected to control the news by

issuing a statement. This is in line with the finding of Taneja *et al.*, (2014). Most of the customers (79.098 per cent) disagreed with the position that the company should not say anything but allow the crisis to fade away. Also, (65.983 per cent) of the customers did not agree with the position that the companies under crisis should not take responsibility in their communication. Other positions agreed to by the customers (83.377 per cent) are that the companies should communicate their sympathy to the victims of the crisis, if any; 61.885 per cent said the company should disclose its compensation for the victims; and 65.573 per cent are of the position that the company should disclose what is being done to forestall future occurrence of the crisis.

**Research Question: what is the degree of the research of corporate organisations into their relationships with stakeholders (customers)?**

Higher percentage of the respondents (56.250 per cent) said companies have never asked them questions about their products or services while the balance (43.750 per cent) said they have been asked questions before. They explained further that the companies that asked questions are usually telecommunications and pay television companies. They added that the questions were usually asked at subscription renewal period especially when they have not renewed their subscription. Consequently, the research by the companies was for transactional purposes and not necessarily on the performances of the companies.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The study set out to: ascertain the crisis communication expectations of the media from an organisation during crisis management time; find out the crisis communication expectations of the customers of an organisation; and investigate the degree of the

research of corporate organisations into their relationships with stakeholders (media and customers).

The information provided by both the qualitative (in-depth interview) and quantitative research (survey) methods have answered the research questions which met the three objectives. The postulations of the two-way asymmetrical model as propounded by Grunig and Hunt, that organisations communicate two ways but with imbalanced effects and research is formative and to evaluate attitudes, have also been met thereby underlining the position of Flick (2014) that theoretical sampling technique as applicable to qualitative studies is used to generalise to the theory as against statistical sampling technique that is used to generalise to the population of the study under the probability sampling technique or the sample of the population under the non-probability sampling technique.

This theoretical underpinning is also in line with the submission of Wang and Dong (2017) that most studies in crisis management and communication adopted theories or theoretical models. Tejumaiye and Daramola (2018) add that probability sampling is that sampling technique that follows mathematical procedure while non-probability sampling technique is the opposite. As noted earlier, the supported two-way asymmetrical model communicates two ways but with imbalanced effects which show that organisations only protect their own interests lopsidedly (asymmetrically).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study recommends the following:

As the stakeholders (media and customers) state their communication expectations from the organisations during crisis management, these expectations were somehow different which is borne out of the needs of each stakeholder. However, the two stakeholders agree that the public relations practitioners in

organisations do not really evaluate their relationships with them. This is an area that further work is recommended.

It is also recommended that public relations practitioners should adhere to the expectations of the media and customers in their crisis communication while managing crises in their organisations as shown by this work. This will allow the organisations to be able to tap into the latent power of the crisis which implies improved activities, operations and profits for the concerned organisations.

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