



Communication Techniques in Crisis Management: Effectiveness of Crisis Management Mechanisms in Bunda Catholic Diocese, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This article examines the effectiveness of crisis management mechanisms employed by the Catholic Church in Bunda Diocese, Tanzania, with a specific focus on communication practices and managerial coordination during institutional crises.

Design/methodology/approach: This study adopts a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with diocesan leaders and communication actors, document analysis, and nonparticipant observation. Situational crisis communication theory guided the analysis.

Findings: The findings indicate that the Diocese relies on a combination of formal ecclesial structures and informal pastoral networks in managing crises. These mechanisms are effective at preserving internal cohesion and moral legitimacy but are less effective in proactive planning, media engagement, and strategic coordination.

Practical implications: This study highlights the need for faith-based organisations to institutionalise crisis communication policies, strengthen managerial coordination, and invest in professional communication capacity while remaining faithful to their moral and spiritual identity.

Originality/value: By examining crisis management within a Catholic diocese in Tanzania, the study extends crisis communication scholarship to under researched faith-based organisations in the Global South and contributes context-sensitive insights relevant to communication management practice.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Crises constitute moments of heightened uncertainty that threaten organisational legitimacy, credibility, and stakeholder trust (Coombs, 2015). Communication plays a central role in shaping how crises are interpreted, attributed, and resolved, making crisis management fundamentally a communicative and managerial process. For faith-based organisations such as the Catholic Church, crises carry deeper moral and spiritual implications, affecting pastoral credibility and moral authority (Heath, 2010).

In Tanzania, the Catholic Church remains among the most influential social institutions, with a strong presence in education, health care, and social development. Bunda Catholic Diocese, located in the Mara region in Tanzania, operates in a complex sociocultural and media environment marked by strong communal ties, oral communication traditions, and increasing media scrutiny. Like other ecclesial institutions, the Diocese experienced crises related to leadership tensions, administrative challenges, and public controversies. Despite this, systematic scholarly research on crisis communication within Catholic dioceses in Tanzania and African religious institutions remains limited.

This study addresses this gap by ascertaining the effectiveness of crisis management mechanisms in Bunda Catholic Diocese, Tanzania. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following question: *“How effective are the crisis management mechanisms employed by the Diocese in addressing institutional crisis through communication??”* By focusing on this objective, the study contributes to both communication theory and the practice of crisis management in faith-based organisations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Crisis and crisis management

A crisis is defined as an unpredictable event that poses a serious threat to organisational operations, reputation, or stakeholder relationships (Coombs, 2015). From a communication perspective, crises are socially constructed phenomena whose meaning is negotiated through discourse (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). Crisis management therefore encompasses both operational responses and strategic communication processes aimed at mitigating harm and restoring trust.

2.2 Situational crisis communication theory (SCCT)

This study is informed by Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), which was developed by Timothy W. Coombs in 2007. The theory focuses on how organisations respond to crises on the basis of the nature of the crisis and the organisation's prior reputation

(Coombs, 2007). It can be applied to understand how the Catholic Church in Tanzania uses specific communication strategies, such as denial, apology, or corrective action, depending on the crisis type, for example, scandals, natural disasters, or social unrest. This theory helps explore how the Church maintains its image and addresses public concerns during crises.

The theory explains that people judge and consider organisations responsible in certain situations on the basis of how they were involved in causing such crises (Coombs, 2020). It is very useful for organisations seeking the most appropriate communication strategies to defend their reputation and maintain stakeholders' positive perceptions. Furthermore, situational crisis communication theory suggests different strategies for proper crisis management, such as denying techniques, diminishing techniques, rebuilding techniques, and bolstering techniques (Frandsen & Johansen, 2017). This theory helps determine whether Bunda Catholic Diocese has in place appropriate crisis communication techniques.

The SCCT divides crises into three types, namely, victim crises where the organisation is termed not responsible for the cause and consequences of the crisis and accidental crises where the organisation is moderately termed responsible and preventable crises where the organisation is termed full responsibility for the causes and consequences of the crisis (Marynissen, 2023). The SCCT helped identify different types of crises faced by Bunda Catholic Diocese and how to address them accordingly.

The effectiveness of this theory of crisis management is bolstered by its consideration of factors such as the history of the crisis and the cultural, situational, and prior reputation status of a given organisation (Coombs & Holladay, 2010).

Since stakeholders' perceptions of how the organisation is responsible for the given crisis influence their own specific crisis communication techniques (Coombsen & Halladay, 2010; Frandsen & Johansen, 2017; Marynissen, 2023; Coombs, 2020), Situational Crisis Communication Theory can help Bunda Catholic Diocese and the Catholic Church in Tanzania develop their own specific crisis communication techniques on the basis of the specific situations of the Catholic Church in Tanzania, which will reduce damage to the Church's reputation while restoring or maintaining the trust of stakeholders.

2.3 Types of crises according to the level of responsibility by SCCT

According to the level of responsibility by SCCT, crises fall into three categories: Victim crises, that is, when an institution has nothing to do with the causes and consequences of the crisis; Accidental crises, that is, when an institution has some responsibility for the causes and consequences of the crisis; and Preventable crises, that is, when an institution has all the

responsibility for the causes and consequences of the crisis (Coombs, 2007).

In this way, Marynissen (2023) notes that the greater the responsibility or culpability stakeholders attribute to the organisation, the greater the need for the organisation to accept responsibility and respond to stakeholders' safety and psychological needs. Failure to see this attribution of responsibility from stakeholders implies the downfall of an institution.

There are crises that do occur or face an institution that it could do nothing to prevent or control. If the consequences of such crises are attributed to a certain institution, they make it an innocent victim responsible for others' faults (Spradley, 2017). Although an institution is not the cause of the crisis in any way, it ends up being harmed by the outcomes of the crisis in question.

Examples of victim crises include natural disasters such as earthquakes; product tempering, such as crimes that contaminate products in the store; workplace violence, such as when a disgruntled factory worker commits violence on-site; rumour attacks, such as people falsely accusing a parish priest of molesting children; and terrorist attacks, such as Catholic Church Universities experiencing bombings on their premises.

Accidental crises imply that institutions face events such as accidents. They could have done something to prevent such events, but owing to short comings that could be controlled had they been more professional, the crises occurred (Spradley, 2017). There is a lack of focus on the side of an institution that falls under these kinds of crises. If focus is maintained, these crises could be proactively handled.

Vividing examples of accidental crises include technical error product harm, such as cars' unintended airbag malfunction, industrial accidents, whereas a chemical spill occurs due to equipment failure, a university's data breach that can lead to unintentional exposure of students' records, parish accounts mismanagement, and transportation mishap, just like when an airline faces backlash after a mechanical failure delays several flights for hours.

Spradley (2017) explains preventable crises as those that fall within the ability of an institution to fully control it; the idea here is to see an institution as being culpable of managing the situation before it happens and escalates. The lack of a crisis communication plan may be one of the causes of such failures. Here, institutions are termed hundred percent responsible for the causes and consequences of the given crisis.

Preventable crises may include the following: financial misconduct, such as when a cashier deliberately falsifies an annual financial report; regulatory violation, such as when a land department of a Catholic diocese knowingly ignores paying for title deeds of their lands; workplace safety negligence, such as when a Catholic hospital fails to enforce hygiene measures on its premises, leading to avoidable sickness; and misconduct, such as A bishop defending his priest, who

abused children; and environmental disregard by an organisation.

2.4 Understanding crisis management in the Catholic Church

Crises have been, are and will be a constant part of the life of the Church (Przybysz & Kloch, 2022); this makes it necessary for Catholic Church leaders to understand and apply crisis management plans in their daily management activities. There exists the reality of being hurt by crises if there is no understanding of how to manage them properly (Carroggio, 2021). Managing a crisis implies understanding the crisis, putting a proper plan to counteract it, and constantly following up on the situation so that it does not reoccur.

Przybysz and Kloch (2022), when the Catholic Church in Poland was examined in the context of child and youth protection crises, reported that Catholic Church institutions are subject to the same crisis communication principles that have been used by other private sectors. The Catholic Church's failure to properly manage communication led to hiding facts, avoiding responsibilities, and hypocrisy exacerbated harm, whereas the transparent, rapid, and professional handling of resources and messaging turned crises into opportunities for healing, renewal, and restoring trust (Przybysz & Kloch, 2022). This study highlights that the media, rather than the Church itself, often shapes the narratives of crises, making proactive communication and ethical accountability central to effective crisis management.

Carroggio (2021) complements this view by suggesting a theoretical framework for Catholic Church communication in cases of abuse of minors, the one that integrates ecclesiological perspectives with organisational communication theory. Carroggio (2021) emphasises the Catholic Church's dual vulnerability, that is, of being both passive and active. This means that the Catholic Church is capable of being harmed and is capable of causing harm. Ecclesial communication should adhere to reality or truth through the stages of identity, culture, discourse, image, and reputation, situate itself in the lived experience of victims, and allow errors and failures to become turning points. The emphasis is that transparency, empathy, and accountability are not peripheral but foundational to rebuilding credibility.

2.3 Role of Communication during a crisis in Institutions

Spradley (2022) argues that a central role of crisis communication is the safety of the actors involved in and influenced by the crisis; these actors or stakeholders may be internal or external, primary or secondary. Institutions need an effective communication plan to prevent them from being negatively impacted by given crises. Such a plan should minimise risks in the short term as much as possible.

Carroggio (2021) highlights two important roles of crisis communication in the Catholic Church:

For healing purposes, which avoid declarative communication, rather than promoting curative communication that repairs the damage caused to victims, they can ask for forgiveness, restore Christian values that have been lost, and prevent future crises. Crisis communication in the Catholic Church continues (Carroggio, 2021) in that it offers explanatory functions by sharing thinking of the Church institution concern, clarifying what is necessary, avoiding rumours, and generating new bonds and trust. Here, when properly conducted, crisis communication helps the Church avoid harm or damage that could be the consequences of the given crisis.

Integrative purpose, according to Carroggio (2021), is another role played by crisis communication practices in the Catholic Church. This comes about when the Church applies investigative and listening techniques when communicating a crisis. When legal, psychological, spiritual, and communication aspects are connected, a crisis occurs as a time for cross-functional working, whereas communication efforts are about showing rather than talking (Griffin, 2014). The crisis is solved not by decisions from one party but by cumulative decisions.

2.6 Empirical Studies in Africa and Tanzania Contexts

Empirical studies on crisis communication in Africa have largely focused on corporate and governmental organisations, highlighting challenges such as limited communication planning, reactive strategies, and weak media relations (Chari & Ngcamu, 2019). In Tanzania, research on institutional communication structure underscores the need for professionalised communication structures within public and nonprofit organisations (Mashauri & Mwita, 2018). This study extends this body of knowledge by focusing on a Catholic diocese as a distinct organisational context.

2.4 Research Gap

From some of the studies performed worldwide with some similar traits with the study at hand, it is found that such studies have been performed and are somewhat similar but also differ in terms of the kinds of organisations studied and the scope of the organisation studied, such as the Catholic Church. Studies on this topic, such as (Chari & Ngcamu, 2019) and (Mashauri & Mwita, 2018), have focused mostly on the government and other secular institutions or organisations. Very limited empirical research exists on how Catholic dioceses in Tanzania handle crises using communication strategies and techniques.

At the national level, the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC) publishes pastoral letters and guidelines on social and moral issues, but there is no documented research that systematically analyses how

individual dioceses translate these national guidelines into crisis communication practices on the ground.

This leaves a gap in understanding how communication techniques are applied practically, who communicates, which tools are used, and how crises are managed at the diocesan and parish levels. Specifically, Bunda Catholic Diocese, being a young diocese situated in semipastoralist and rural environments near Serengeti National Park, faces unique communication challenges, namely, limited digital infrastructure, scarce trained communication personnel, diverse cultural groups, and emerging crises related to pastoral conflicts, misinformation, social media rumours, and institutional challenges.

However, no known study has assessed how the Diocese uses communication techniques (such as pastoral letters, public statements, parish briefings, radio programs, or social media updates) to manage crises. This creates a practical and theoretical gap between crisis communication models in the literature and their actual application within a real diocesan context in Tanzania. Therefore, I found the research gap to be the limited focus on localised church crisis management in the Catholic Church in Tanzania.

By studying Bunda Catholic Diocese, this research provides insights into crisis communication at the grassroots level. This research provides localised evidence, enhances the understanding of church crisis management, and may help diocese and Catholic dioceses in Tanzania strengthen their communication structures, preparedness, and response mechanisms.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

This study adopted a qualitative research approach to explore the communication techniques used by the Catholic Church in Tanzania to manage crises, with a focus on the Bunda Catholic Diocese as a case study. As Yin (2018) argued that the qualitative approach is concerned with a subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions, and behaviors, a more in-depth observation approach of research participants is needed; therefore, research participants must present themselves to the researcher in a way that is transparent so that the researcher can form an in-depth assessment of how they are responding. This approach fit this study well because it involved an assessment of the attitudes, behaviours and opinions of the stakeholders of the Catholic Church in Bunda diocese.

3.2 Research Design

The study used a case study research design since it allows for an in-depth examination of crisis communication strategies and techniques within a specific religious institution, that is, Bunda Catholic Diocese. Yin (2018) understands research design as a

conceptual structure within which the research is conducted; it is a structure, scheme, or plan that is used to generate answers to research problems. Therefore, Bunda Catholic Diocese was used to generate answers to this study.

3.3 Data collection procedures

The study employed the following data collection methods: interviews and document review.

3.3.1 Interviews

Interviews are qualitative research methods that are employed to gain deeper insight into stakeholders' perspectives about a specific phenomenon (Coombs, 2014). The study used semistructured interviews to obtain data from the respondents. Interviews were conducted with diocesan authority, clergy, lay leaders, communication personnel, and parishioners to gather insights into their experiences and perspectives on crisis management in Bunda Catholic Diocese.

3.3.2 Document Review

Document review is a qualitative research method that involves the systematic analysis of existing documents to extract relevant information for a given study to understand historical data, organisational practices, and stakeholder communication (Coombs, 2014). The review was performed on diocesan reports and archival records to analyse documented crises and responses.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

Given that the study is qualitative research, the collected data were analysed by a thematic method or analysis whereby different meanings were attached to the qualitative data according to the researcher's synthetic view of the complete body of data. Braun and Clarke (2006) show thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data. They developed a structured framework to guide researchers on how to undergo a thematic analysis process.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested the following six-phase framework for thematic analysis: First, familiarise the data, generate initial codes by systematically identifying important features of the data, search for the themes by grouping similar codes together, review the themes by checking if they make sense in relation to the coded data and the whole data set, define and name each theme by ensuring that each captures a unique and meaningful aspect of the data, and write a report with a narrative explanation of the themes and discuss the findings in relation to literature.

The authors thematically analysed the data that came from the examination of crisis communication techniques in Bunda Catholic Diocese by following this framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke (2006) justified the relevance of thematic analysis to this study by explaining that its flexibility means that it can be applied to different types of qualitative data; it recognises patterns by focusing on themes that capture important aspects of data, and it is data- or theory-driven because themes emerge inductively from data or may be guided by the suggested theoretical framework.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was paramount in this study. The research adhered to internationally recognised ethical principles for social and behavioural sciences as outlined by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2020). These principles include respect for persons, beneficence, and justice, ensuring that participants' rights, dignity, and welfare are safeguarded throughout the research process.

First, informed consent was obtained from all participants, including diocesan authorities, clergy, laity leaders, communication personnel, and parishioners. They were informed of the study's purpose, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any point without penalty. This was to ensure that participation was truly voluntary and based on comprehension (APA, 2020).

Second, confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained. Identifiable information was either coded or omitted to protect participants' privacy. In reporting the findings, pseudonyms were used, and no individual or parish was named directly. All the data were securely stored and accessible only to the researcher.

Third, the principle of beneficence was observed by ensuring that the study posed no physical, psychological, or spiritual harm to the participants. Sensitive questions were framed, and pastoral content was taken into account to avoid undue stress. Moreover, participants were assured that the findings would be used strictly for academic purposes, with potential benefits to Bunda Catholic Diocese in improving its crisis communication strategies.

Finally, ethical approval was sought from the relevant university research committee before data collection began. This ensured that the study complied with institutional research ethics. By adhering to these principles, the study upheld integrity, accountability, and respect, which are indispensable in both academic research and Catholic values.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Crisis Management Mechanisms in Bunda Catholic Diocese

The findings reveal that the Diocese employs both formal and informal crisis management mechanisms. Formal mechanisms include episcopal leadership, diocesan councils, official pastoral communications, and homilies.

Informal mechanisms rely on interpersonal communication, trusted clergy, few digital platforms, small Christian community meetings, and pulpit announcements and reflect the communal nature of ecclesial life.

4.2 Communication Techniques During Crises

Bunda Catholic Diocese employs pastoral framing, hierarchical communication, and selective media engagement. Crises are often interpreted as spiritual trials, communicated through theological language, emphasising prayers, unity, and reconciliation. Information typically flows from the Bishop through clergy to the laity, reinforcing ecclesial authority.

4.3 Effectiveness of crisis management mechanisms

The participants perceived these mechanisms as effective in maintaining internal cohesion and minimising open conflict, which is consistent with the sensemaking described by Weich (1995). The moral credibility of church leadership enhances the level of trust among internal stakeholders. However, effectiveness is reduced in situations requiring rapid responses, public clarification, or media engagement, as predicted by SCCT (Coombs, 2015).

4.4 Limiting Effectiveness

The key challenges include the absence of a formal crisis communication policy, limited training in strategic communication, and a predominantly reactive approach. Tensions between transparency and fear of reputational damage further constrain communication effectiveness, echoing the findings of Benoit (1997) and Sellnow and Seeger (2013).

5. CONCLUSION

The communication techniques used during crisis management in Bunda Catholic Diocese appear to yield moderate results rather than strong or weak results. The reasons behind this trend include poor information flow, delayed responses, a lack of a professional crisis communication plan, and zero-crisis communication drills to diocesan communication personnel. The quality of responses to crises is shaped by the Diocese's governance.

"Although our communication techniques seem to yield results sometimes, the delays, lack of follow-ups, and limited use of modern digital platforms imply that were just reaching only some part of the stakeholders" (Clergy, 29 July 2025).

Despite all the efforts made to address crises in Bunda Catholic Diocese, the results are far from impressive.

5.0 Recommendations

On the basis of the above conclusions, the study proposes the following recommendations, which are suggested together with actions and their respective actors aiming at balancing the Catholic pastoral tradition with contemporary crisis communication standards:

5.1.1 For the Bunda Catholic Diocese

The researcher advised Bunda Catholic Diocese to work on the following areas so that its crisis communication could be managed properly:

On Governance and Policy

Bunda Catholic Diocese has to adopt a Diocesan crisis communication policy with clear crisis classification in terms of Victim crises, accidental crises, and preventable crises, as presented by Coombs (2007). The policy should clearly state the particular roles and who is exclusively responsible for what stage of crisis management and crisis communication; let it be The Bishop's Office, Diocesan Communication Office, Diocesan Legal Department, etc.etc. Documentation should be standardised.

Through crisis differentiation and clustering, the crisis response committee will be able to determine the proper tone, strategy, and techniques to be applied when handling a given crisis.

Constitute a crisis response committee (CRC). This can constitute the following members: The Vicar General as a Chairperson, The Communication Officer as a Spokesperson, and Judicial Vicar to look after all legal matters pertaining to crises, Representative of the Youths, Women, Men, and lay media professional as members. They must function on 24/7 on-call roster during crises, first actions, and after-action reviews during crisis management procedures.

In light of Coombs (2020), the crisis response committee (CRC) will prepare a crisis communication plan for the Diocese, work on crisis activation and coordination upon the detection of crises, and carry out faithful, compassionate, and timely crisis communication procedures for transparency, liaison and accountability.

Establish or Create a Spokesperson System. The system should include two personnel, the primary spokesperson, who is to be the Diocese's communication officer, and the alternate spokesperson, who can be either a trained priest or a lay media professional. This system must put in place and have access to the Diocese's media briefing room, press list, contact protocols, and other important media tools.

The head of the spokesperson system should possess unshakable knowledge of the teachings of the Catholic Church; be well informed with all local cultures that affect the Diocese; have the skills for communication; be credible, calm, and composure to control pressure; and speak the same language as the bishop but with inclusive language (Carroggio, 2021).

On Preparedness and Capacity Building

Bunda Catholic Diocese needs to be on alert at any time to properly address the threat of crises or actual crises. This can be achieved by embarking on the following activities suggested by (Carroggio, 2021).

The Diocese has to develop a Rapid-Response Toolkit. The communication office should have preapproved templates for holding statements, pastoral letters, questions and answers, and social posts. Additionally, they should have a rumour-control checklist, translation pipeline, and a first-hour workflow; that is, they should put a plan on how to calm the situation within one hour of its existence.

Conduct Trainings and Drills. There should be annual workshops for diocesan communication personnel, clergy, catechists, Nuns, and some selected laypersons on media skills, message discipline, trauma-informed communication, and safeguarding. Additionally, table-top exercises should be performed per crisis type to simulate hostile media and viral rumours. This helps increase awareness of crisis communication among Bunda Catholic Diocese people's hierarchy and faithfulness.

On Safeguarding and Ethics Infrastructure. Confidential reporting channels, such as email addresses and WhatsApp groups, clear timelines for investigation, published procedures, and lay oversight, must be established to enhance trust.

On Channels and Engagement

Bunda Catholic Diocese must be strong in media, that is, have a strong media presence by working on the following:

Work on Strengthening Digital Presence. This can be accomplished by establishing an official website crisis page; a verified Facebook page; a WhatsApp broadcast list for parish communication; and Diocese's Official YouTube Channel, Instagram, TikTok and X accounts; simple content calendars; and moderation rules for such platforms. The communication department should adopt a "single source of truth" update mirrored to parishes and diocesan media. There should be a single center and spokesperson for addressing crises. The strong presence in digital media helps Diocese solve the delay problem by prioritising speed and accuracy to prevent misinformation. Bunda Catholic Diocese must go more digital.

Embark on Strategic Media Partnerships. This can be accomplished by making the Memorandums of Understandings with Catholic radio such as Radio Maria and other secular local FM stations such as Bunda FM, Ukerewe FM, and Mazingira FM for emergency air time slots. Diocesan communication officers have to establish good relationships with local journalists and arrange with them for periodic background briefings, not only on crises but also on other important church events.

Establish Youth and Community Interface. This can be accomplished by establishing Parish Youth Media Teams, which will work on content capture at the parish level, myth-busting to correct issues of misinformation, etc., which will be aired in parish and diocesan media platforms.

"In my home diocese of Kayunga, the bishop has managed to make good relationships with a local FM station where all sensitive topics are given air time on time" (Leader of laity, 17th August 2015).

The communication department should frequently prepare the main figures in the Diocese, such as the bishop, Vicar General, and Vocation Director, to make short videos explaining sensitive topics of faith and other social issues.

On Response and Recovery Processes

To ensure the continuity of the crisis communication plan of Bunda Catholic Diocese, the following crisis response committee (CRC) must maintain these practices:

Communicate to stakeholders with SCCT-Aligned Messaging. The crisis response committee must ensure that each crisis type is dealt with its proper crisis communication strategy and techniques for proper results (Coombs, 2014). For example, Victim crises call for an empathy strategy that results in solidarity, Accidental crises call for explanation and corrective actions that result in people being assured of the Church's commitment and accountability, and preventable crises demand explicit responsibility, a genuine apology, and verifiable reforms such as timelines, audits, and public summaries on a given topic of crisis (Coombs, 2014).

Ensure Transparency and Follow-up throughout the crisis. This can be accomplished by publishing postincident summaries on what happened, actions taken, and lessons learned within a few days of the crisis. The ability to continue communication beyond the immediate crisis needs to be developed by making follow-up stories and updating policies publicly.

Furthermore, to ensure transparency, Bunda Catholic Diocese should start and maintain financial records and accountability by publishing clear financial reports, especially where donations are involved, and creating a crisis log through maintaining a detailed timeline of actions and communications for future reference.

Monitoring and evaluation of the crisis management process should be maintained. The CRC should work on time to first statements, misinformation suppression, engagement, fluctuations in trust sentiments from parish surveys, and resolution timelines.

In addition, the crisis response committee should independently review the immediate crises. The commission should review how the crisis was handled and share the results publicly.

5.1.2 For Tanzania Episcopal Conference

The study focused on assessing communication techniques used by the Catholic Church in Tanzania in managing crises. Thus, the conclusions and recommendations automatically apply to the wider Catholic Church in Tanzania. The following are recommendations for the TEC according to the conclusions of this study:

To Establish a Catholic crisis communication desk (CCCD)

Tanzania Episcopal Conference must establish and maintain a strong standing structure within its secretariat to coordinate communication during crises. The CCCD should have a Bishop as its head to give moral authority and binding final approval of its statements. It should have a crisis communication coordinator with a strong public relations and journalism background and be skilled in media relations and crisis management. The coordinator, with his carefully selected team, should professionally handle the day-to-day activities of the CCCD.

The CCCD will manage and coordinate all communication at the Behalf of Tanzania Episcopal Conference during crises. The well-prepared message from this desk ensures accurate, timely, and compassionate messaging that maintains the Church's integrity, works for the truth, and takes into account pastoral care for all stakeholders of the Church in crisis. This team will help to always come up with coordinated crisis responses throughout all Catholic dioceses in Tanzania. The team will keep records of crisis communication at the national level and recommend new crisis communication policies and procedural improvements.

To integrate crisis communication courses into major seminars and Catechist training.

Students studying towards becoming priests and lay persons who are trained as catechists should be given an opportunity to understand in depth communication, specifically crisis communication management.

Such a course will help strengthen priests' pastoral leadership during crises, as priests are normally the first point of contact of reference when crises occur in dioceses, parishes, or when other Catholic Church institutions face scandals and conflicts. This course aligns communication with the Gospel values of truth, charity, and reconciliation.

The course also helps priests protect the Church's integrity, as they are able to prevent misinformation and rumours from emerging from the stations of work. The well-prepared clergy on crisis communication has small risks of making contradictory or harmful statements against the Church during sensitive times. Once again, the course enhances priests with skills for the modern ministry through media literacy, as they will be engaged effectively in journalism, social media, and digital platforms. This will help improve their

dialogue skills with parishioners, interfaith leaders, civil authorities, and youths.

To Encourage Dioceses to Collaborate more with secular media for timely crisis reporting and correction of misinformation.

The Tanzania Episcopal Conference Secretariat must take purposeful steps to encourage Catholic dioceses to use the media platform in their areas to address their crises and other events effectively. The dioceses can establish proactive partnerships and training with secular media through regular engagement with journalists and media houses to explain Church teachings on air or media familiarisation visits by inviting reporters to Church events to build trust and preparing capacity building for journalists by offering media content seminars to them.

Moreover, the TEC secretariat has to encourage and help every diocese build or create rapid-response communication channels. They have to use digital platforms for speed through active diocesan platforms and work with shared fact-checking networks to counter misinformation. The should argue all dioceses to a spokesperson system.

5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study suggest several avenues for future research on crisis communication within the Catholic Church. Comparative studies of dioceses in Tanzania could examine how institutions operating under different resource conditions but within similar cultural contexts respond to comparable crises and identify context-specific best practices. Researchers may also adopt mixed-methods approaches that combine quantitative measures of trust, credibility, and perceived transparency with qualitative interviews to assess the effectiveness of specific communication strategies during crises. In addition, further investigation is needed into how local cultural frameworks, such as proverbs, storytelling traditions, and communal reconciliation practices, can be ethically integrated into crisis messaging to enhance understanding, reconciliation, and healing among affected communities.

Given the growing influence of digital communication, future studies should explore the media habits, credibility assessments, and communication preferences of young people to inform the development of crisis communication strategies that are both doctrinally sound and responsive to contemporary media environments. Longitudinal research on safeguarding governance mechanisms, including lay oversight boards, reporting systems, and public accountability measures, could provide valuable insights into the restoration of trust following institutional crises. Moreover, studies employing content and sentiment analysis of social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp could examine patterns of rumour dissemination and the effectiveness of countermessaging strategies during crises. Further research could also investigate the role of

lay faithful in crisis communication and assess how their participation influences institutional credibility, stakeholder trust, and the overall effectiveness of crisis response efforts.

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