

**MEDIA RELATIONS IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF KABALE DISTRICT
LOCAL GOVERNMENT.**

BY

NIWENSIIMA RITAH

S23/BBUC/BAJC/016

**ARESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF MASS COMMUNICATION IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF**

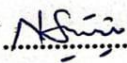
BACHELOR OF ARTS IN MASSCOMMUNICATION

UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

JUNE, 2026

DECLARATION

I, NIWENSIIMA RITAH, hereby state that the research report contained herein is my own work and has not been submitted to any other institution for consideration in obtaining an award before. Any shortcomings contained in the dissertation are solely mine.

Sign: 

Date: 18th 07 / 2026

NIWENSIIMA RITAH

S23/BBUC/BAJC/016

(RESEARCHER)

APPROVAL

The above research report was carried out under my supervision, and is now ready for submission to Uganda Christian University.

Sign: 

Ms. KEMIGISHA MAURICE

(UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR)

Date: 18th / 8 / 2028

DEDICATION

In this research, I would like to dedicate to my Dad Mr. Mbarebaki George, my Mom Mrs. Beinengero Allen, my brothers Biryabarema Rodgers and Bikorwomuhangi Reagan, my sister Ainembabazi Racheal and Nabimanya Reticia who have provided me with strength through their unwavering support, encouragement and prayers. I also wish to dedicate this work to my lecturers and tutor.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Firstly, I wish to thank Almighty God for giving me the wisdom, strength, and fortitude to undertake this research successfully. I wish to sincerely thank my Supervisor, Ms. Kemigisha Maurice, and the lecturers of Uganda Christian University, Bishop Barham University College for the assistance and feedback that they have extended during the process of this research. I also wish to appreciate my fellow students and friends such as Kyomuhangi Mackline, Gumoshabe Angella, Tusingwire Vallen, and Nuwareba Agatah for the inspiration and support they have extended to me intellectually. Finally, I thank all the respondents who participated in this research.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

PR -	Public Relations
MR -	Media Relations
CM -	Crisis Management
SCCT -	Situational Crisis Communication Theory
SM -	Social Media
IMC -	Integrated Marketing Communication
NGO -	Non-Governmental Organization
CSR -	Corporate Social Responsibility

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of media relations in crisis management in organizations. In the modern highly interconnected communication era, organizations are faced with different kinds of crises such as reputation threats, financial frauds, operational failures, and public relations problems. In such cases, media relations were very important in influencing the process of communicating the information via traditional and new media channels. Media relations allowed organizations to control information, reduce misinformation, and maintain stakeholder confidence in the situation of a crisis. The study was based on the theory of excellence in public relations. This theory focuses on the importance of two-way symmetrical communication in organization-public relations. The study used a descriptive research design and a mixed-methods approach including quantitative and qualitative methods. The population for the study will include employees, stakeholders, communication specialists, and public relations professionals in the selected organization. The data collection tools will include questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. The study is supposed to reveal media relations practices of organizations in the case of a crisis, investigate the role of media relations in enhancing crisis management, and examine organizational challenges in managing media relations. The results are expected to indicate that the methods such as press releases, media briefings, spokespersons, and digital media updates played a significant role in shaping the outcome of the crisis through enhancing communication clarity and transparency. The research was expected to prove that media relations were an important aspect of the crisis management process as it not only improved communication effectiveness but also reinforced organizational reputation and trust. These results proved to be highly beneficial for

the communication specialists, organizational managers, policy-makers, and researchers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	i
APPROVAL.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
LIST OF ACRONYMS	v
ABSTRACT	vi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.3 Purpose of the Study	3
1.4 Objectives of the Study	3
1.5 Research Questions	3
1.6 Justification of the Study	3
1.7 Scope of the Study	4
1.7.1 Geographical Scope	4
1.7.2 Content Scope.....	4
1.7.3 Time Scope	4
1.8 Significance of the Study.....	5
1.9 Limitations of the Study.....	5
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	6

2.0 Introduction.....	6
2.1 Theoretical Framework	7
2.2 Media Relations Strategies Used by Organizations During Crises.....	9
2.3 Role of Media Relations in Effective Crisis Management	11
2.4 Challenges Organizations Face in Managing Media Relations During Crises	13
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	16
3.0 Introduction.....	16
3.1 Research Design	16
3.2 Study Area.....	17
3.3 Study Population and Sample Size	17
3.4 Sampling Methods	17
3.5 Sources of Data	18
3.6 Data Collection Instruments	18
3.6.1 Questionnaire	18
3.6.2 Interview Guide	18
3.6.3 Focus Group Discussion Guide	19
3.7 Data Collection Procedure	19
3.8 Data Analysis, Presentation, and Interpretation	20
3.8.1 Quantitative Data Analysis	20
3.8.2 Qualitative Data Analysis	20
3.9 Ethical Considerations.....	20

3.10 Limitations of the Study	21
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS	22
4.0 Introduction.....	22
4.1 Demographic information of the respondents	22
4.1.1 Gender/Sex Distribution of Respondents.....	23
4.1.2 Age Distribution of respondents	24
4.1.3 Level of Education of Respondents.....	26
4.1.4 Professional background of respondents	27
4.2 Media relations strategies used in crisis management.....	29
4.2.1 Use of press releases during crisis situations	29
4.2.2 Use of press conferences and media briefings	30
4.2.3 Use of social media platforms for crisis communication.....	31
4.2.4 Stakeholder engagement through media relations	32
4.2.5 Maintaining good relationships with journalists	33
4.3 Contribution of Media Relations in Crisis Management	35
4.3.1 Media relations help in controlling misinformation.....	35
4.3.2 Media Relations promote transparency and public trust.....	36
4.3.3 Media relations support reputation protection.....	37
4.4 Challenges faced by media relations practitioners in crisis management	38
4.4.1 Limited funding for media relations activities	39

4.4.2 Lack of trained media relations personnel.....	40
4.4.3 Delayed release of information during crises.....	41
4.4.4 Misinformation and social media challenges.....	42
4.5 Solutions for improving media relations in crisis management.....	43
4.5.1 Training media relations practitioners	43
4.5.2 Development of crisis communication policies.....	44
4.5.3 Investment in modern communication technologies	45
4.6 Chapter Summary	47
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	47
5.0 Introduction.....	47
5.1 Discussion of the Findings.....	48
5.1.1 The Role of Media Relations in Crisis Management	48
5.1.2 The effectiveness of media relations strategies during crisis management .	49
5.1.3 Challenges affecting media relations in crisis management	50
5.2 Summary of the findings	52
5.2.1 The role of media relations in crisis management.....	52
5.2.2 The effectiveness of media relations strategies in crisis management	52
5.2.3 Challenges affecting media relations in crisis management	53
5.3 Conclusions.....	54
5.4 Recommendations.....	54
5.4.1 Strengthen media relations policies	55

5.4.2 Provide continuous training for public relations practitioners	55
5.4.3 Promote timely and accurate information dissemination	55
5.4.4 Enhance collaboration between organizations and media houses	55
5.4.5 Invest in digital communication platforms.....	55
5.4.6 Allocate Adequate financial resources for crisis communication.....	56
5.4.7 Establish dedicated crisis communication teams	56
5.4.8 Strengthen monitoring and management of misinformation	56
5.5 Areas for further research	56
REFERENCES	57

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, scope of the study, justification of the study, significance of the study, and limitations of the study are discussed in this chapter.

1.1 Background of the Study

Media relations have emerged as an indispensable part of crisis management in modern-day organizational communication. Modern-day organizations face numerous crises ranging from product failure, scandal, accident, cybersecurity threats, public health crisis, and reputation-related crises. During these periods, effective communication with the media plays a crucial role in influencing perception, managing misinformation, and gaining trust among stakeholders.

Media relations are defined as the management of communication between an organization and journalists or media houses with a view to ensuring effective dissemination of information. In the case of a crisis, media remains one of the major avenues where stakeholders acquire information about the situation at hand. In this regard, the interaction of organizations with the media plays a critical role in the way a crisis is perceived and understood by stakeholders (Coombs, 2021).

It has been observed that globally organizations have realized the need for efficient media relations during crisis management. For instance, organizations in nations like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada are better prepared for crisis situations through effective media relations strategies.

According to research, organizations that have a consistent and proactive media communications strategy are well placed to manage narratives and minimize reputational harm in times of crisis (Seeger, 2020).

In Africa, the importance of media relations is rising rapidly due to the fast-growing digital media industry, round-the-clock news cycles, and growing demand from the public for accountability. The governments, companies, and non-governmental organizations are subject to the constant media gaze in crisis situations. However, the problems, including delayed communication, poor media readiness, and poor crisis communication planning, are still hindering effective media engagement in most African organizations (Moyo, 2023).

In Uganda, the organizations are faced with the rising need to engage with both traditional and digital media in times of crises. With the emergence of the social media and digital news sources, there is an increase in the pace of spread of crisis information. Therefore, the organizations need to come up with good media relations strategies in order to safeguard their reputations in times of crisis.

1.2 Problem Statement

Crisis management in media relations is becoming more frequent in recent times, which poses danger to the reputation of the media, their stakeholders and performance. Although crisis management is generally understood to be an essential part of media relations, many firms face difficulties in relaying timely, accurate and consistent messages during crisis situations. As a result of this, there are instances of misinformation, wrong impression from the public as well as erosion of stakeholder confidence. This is a challenge not only for the communication leaders, communication officers but also employees, stakeholders and the public at large

who seek credible information in crisis situations. According to Timothy Coombs (2015), strategic crisis communication and organizational response to crisis play a key role in the protection of organizational reputation. Nonetheless, there is very little focus by Coombs on the practical role of media relations strategies in crisis management of organization in local institutional environment especially in developing countries. This has made it imperative to conduct the current study on media relations in crisis management.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of media relations in crisis management.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

- i. To identify the media relations strategies used by organizations during crises.
- ii. To examine the role of media relations in effective crisis management.
- iii. To identify the challenges organizations, face in managing media relations during crises.

1.5 Research Questions

- i. What media relations strategies are used by organizations during crises?
- ii. What role does media relations play in crisis management?
- iii. What challenges do organizations face in managing media relations during crises?

1.6 Justification of the Study

There are many reasons why this research should be conducted, but one major reason is that in today's fast-moving media world, media relations are very

important in crisis communication in an organization. If an organization does not have good media relations, then the media may spread misinformation about the organization's problems and create problems for the organization.

Although it is accepted by many people that media relations are very crucial in crisis communication in an organization, there is a lack of information as regards the efficiency of media relations in crisis communication. For this reason, this research contributed some new knowledge to the field of crisis communication and media relations.

1.7 Scope of the Study

1.7.1 Geographical Scope

In carrying out the study within the organization that has undergone crisis and needed to involve media, there was the need to select an organization because the organization offered the right setting for such a study.

1.7.2 Content Scope

The research was concerned with determining the media relations strategies utilized during crises, their significance in the management of the crisis, and the problems encountered while managing media relations.

1.7.3 Time Scope

This study examined literature from the year 2020 to 2025. This is a relatively recent time period with regards to media relations and crisis communication.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The study enabled organizational leaders to see the significance of media relations in crisis management.

It informed communication professionals and public relations officers on the right strategies of engaging media during crises.

It guided policy makers and public relations officers in formulating policies that promote better media relations and crisis response measures.

It enhanced the theoretical knowledge of mass communication, public relations and crisis communication in the area of media relations in crisis management.

It was also useful as a guide for future researchers on media relations, crisis communication, and organizational communication.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

Some respondents might feel uncomfortable giving information on media relations practice owing to confidentiality issues. Anonymity and confidentiality were provided by the researcher.

Funding problems might occur during data gathering because of transportation, printing, and communication expenses. The researcher was able to deal with this problem through proper budgeting.

Time constraints might affect the process of data gathering due to time allocation for academic requirements. Proper scheduling was done to finish data gathering tasks on time.

Some respondents might be unavailable during the process of data gathering. The researcher did several attempts and schedules to participate in data gathering.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the extant literature put forward by different scholars and researchers on the importance of media relations in managing crises. This chapter critically analyses the perspectives of different scholars on media relations, crisis communication, organizational reputation, stakeholder relations, and media power in times of crises. The objective of conducting the literature review is to identify the existing knowledge, establish relationships between different variables under

study, and identify research gaps which warrant further research. Literature is reviewed systematically starting with the theoretical framework, then the empirical literature according to the research objectives.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This research will be based on the Excellence Theory of Public Relations by James E. Grunig and others. The Excellence Theory holds that effective organizations are those where there is strategic communication, research and symmetrical two-way communication between organizations and their stakeholders (Grunig, 2006). Under this theory, an organization that creates mutually beneficial relationships with the media and other stakeholders will achieve trust building, reputation management, and crisis management. The Excellence Theory makes media relations the central focus of public relations practice through dialogues, openness, and stakeholder relationships as opposed to information dissemination.

According to Grunig (2006), two-way symmetrical communication ensures that organizations are able to address their stakeholders' interests while at the same time keeping their credibility intact in the midst of the crisis. In the same vein, Coombs (2015) also stresses the need for organizations to provide information which is relevant and consistent with the stakeholder's perception regarding the crisis, using the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). Although both authors stress the significance of effective communication, while Grunig's approach is mostly about developing relationship with the stakeholders, Coombs's approach is mostly about choosing the right approach to crisis communication based on the type of crisis.

More recent researchers have broadened these views by asserting that digital media has changed the nature of media relations. According to Johansen and Frandsen

(2020), social media and news websites have made crisis communication faster, thereby complicating media relations more than predicted by the original Excellence Theory. Similarly, Austin and Jin (2018) note that organizations are not only communicating via traditional media but are also engaging with the audience using various digital platforms where constant interpretation and production of information take place. This implies that media relations in the contemporary world should involve integration of both traditional and digital forms of communication to build credibility in a crisis.

Although the Excellence Theory has been widely used, one of the shortcomings of the theory is that it takes it for granted that organizations have the same amount of resources, the same communication ability, and a readiness to use two-way symmetrical communication. Heath (2018) believes that in crisis situations organizations are more concerned about their own safety, interests and information management rather than communicating with their stakeholders. In a similar way, Coombs (2015) notes that crisis situations involve quick decision making and, therefore, symmetrical communication becomes impossible. Also, the theory pays little attention to the role of journalists and digital communicators that increasingly affect the perceptions of the public irrespective of organizations' communication strategies.

Despite many researches that have looked into crisis communication and public relations, most of the existing literature has largely focused on multinational organizations and public bodies in developed nations. Media relations in crisis management in local media organizations, such as the radio stations in the developing community setting in Uganda, has been under-researched. Additionally, there have been limited studies that have emphasized the impact of the ongoing

relationships between the organizations and the journalists and media institutions on crisis management. This is the reason why this study attempts to fill this literature gap by conducting research on the role of media relations in crisis management at Hope Radio, Kikungiri Kabale.

2.2 Media Relations Strategies Used by Organizations During Crises

The media relations tactics have been identified as indispensable for handling crises in an organization, despite differences in perspectives among experts concerning the most effective tactics. According to Timothy Coombs (2021), the press release is the bedrock of crisis communications because it helps organizations to share the factual and well-controlled information prior to rumors dominating people's conversations. Likewise, Matthew Seeger (2020) asserts that the official press statement helps to ensure the consistency of messages and avoid spreading misinformation. In spite of the recognition by both researchers of the importance of timely communication, the main focus of Coombs lies in the protection of reputation through a strategic response while Seeger is more concerned about building public trust through sharing the accurate information.

There are also divergent views between scholars regarding interactive media engagement in crises. According to Robert Ulmer, Timothy Sellnow, and Seeger (2022), press conferences and media briefings improve transparency as they offer an opportunity for the journalist to seek clarification and also allow organizations to address any issues that may be raised. On the other hand, Linjuan Rita Men and Shannon A. Bowen (2022) argue that the effectiveness of media briefings is dependent on how open organizations are as well as how ready they are to take responsibility.

Moreover, the literature points out that management of spokespeople is also considered an essential element of media relations. Specifically, James E. Grunig (2006) claims that the involvement of spokespersons who are trained guarantees consistency of messages and credibility because communication is aligned with organizational policies. Seeger (2020) agrees with that standpoint but claims that the effectiveness of spokespersons relies on their communication skills, media training, and ability to cope with unexpected situations. Based on this perspective, it can be stated that appointment of an official spokesperson is not enough for maintaining organizational credibility; continuous communication training is needed.

The literature review shows that more and more attention is paid to the issue of digital media engagement as an important element of crisis management. In particular, Coombs (2021) believes that through social media websites organizations have the opportunity to give timely updates and clarify false information. Similarly, Men and Bowen (2022) suggest that digital media enables organizations to communicate and engage with its stakeholders in a two-way process. However, other authors highlight that the openness and speed of digital platforms also may contribute to the dissemination of misinformation, increased scrutiny, and low control of organizations over the crisis process.

Monitoring and scanning are also generally recognized as indispensable strategies for media relations. According to Seeger (2020), through consistent monitoring, an organization is capable of identifying misinformation, understanding public mood, and adjusting its communication approach as the crisis progresses. Likewise, Coombs (2021) stresses that monitoring the media coverage of the crisis helps in evaluating how effective the communication approach is and making adjustments if necessary.

Although the significance of media monitoring is generally acknowledged, current research focuses mainly on explaining its theoretical significance while offering limited empirical insight into how organizations, especially media organizations in developing nations, practice media monitoring during crises.

In general, the existing literature proves that good media relations are characterized by timely information exchange, stakeholder communication, well-trained spokespeople, digital communication, and regular media monitoring. Nevertheless, most existing studies pay much attention to large corporations and public bodies in developed countries while there is not enough literature on local media in resource-poor conditions. Moreover, little research has been done on the impact of these media relations tactics on crisis management in community radio stations in Uganda. It is this very gap that serves as the rationale for the current research on media relations in crisis management at Hope Radio, Kikungiri Kabale.

2.3 Role of Media Relations in Effective Crisis Management

It is evident that media relations play an important role in crisis management, but there is no consensus among academics regarding the key role played by them. Timothy Coombs (2021) believes that media relations allow organizations to manage the flow of information as they deliver accurate information that decreases uncertainty and reduces the level of misinformation. In turn, Matthew Seeger (2020) highlights that the importance of media relations consists not only in conveying the accurate information, but also in promoting organizational accountability and increasing public trust. While Coombs sees the importance of strategic communication in protecting the reputation of the organization, Seeger stresses the

need to practice transparent and ethical communication to maintain stakeholders' confidence.

It has also been observed in the literature that media relations play a crucial role in influencing organizational reputation; however, the literature provides different explanations for this relationship. According to Ulmer et al. (2022), organizations who enjoy positive relations with the media are considered more credible and responsible in crisis situations. Moreover, Coombs (2021) opines that media relations help organizations protect their reputation from being tarnished in crisis situations by framing public understanding about the situation prior to the spread of misinformation. However, both these researchers emphasize mostly organizational communication and give little consideration to external factors like media framing, journalists' independence, and public interpretation of the crisis message.

One more essential function of media relations is the management of misinformation and perception. According to Men and Bowen (2022), the establishment of good media relations makes it possible for an organization to address rumors in a prompt manner and disseminate truthful information via traditional and digital media channels. In the same vein, Seeger (2020) highlights the importance of quick addressing of misinformation as it will help minimize panic among the public and increase the credibility of communications. However, it should be noted that recent advances in digital communication imply that organizations are not able to control crisis stories any longer due to the influence of social media users, influencers, and citizen journalists.

Scholars also recognize that media relations contribute to transparency and organizational legitimacy during crises. Coombs (2021) argues that transparent

communication strengthens stakeholder confidence by demonstrating openness and responsiveness. Men and Bowen (2022) support this view but further argue that transparency is meaningful only when organizations actively engage stakeholders through dialogue rather than simply releasing information. Their perspective broadens the understanding of media relations by emphasizing stakeholder participation as a key determinant of communication effectiveness. This suggests that successful crisis management depends not only on what organizations communicate but also on how they respond to stakeholder concerns throughout the crisis lifecycle.

Finally, the literature shows that media relations play an important role in post-crisis recovery and image building. According to Seeger (2020), ongoing interaction with media helps organizations to show their responsibility, inform about their activities and recover the lost confidence from stakeholders after a crisis. While previous works recognize the significance of media relations during crisis management, most of them are conducted in the context of big companies and governmental organizations in developed countries. The few empirical studies that explore how media relations can help in crisis management in media organizations in Uganda, especially in community radio stations like Hope Radio, Kikungiri Kabale are absent. Therefore, this gap serves as the basis for the current work.

2.4 Challenges Organizations Face in Managing Media Relations During Crises

According to the literature review, there are various issues that hinder media relations in crisis situations. However, there are different opinions on what exactly the most important factors influencing this process are. Thus, Timothy Coombs (2021) believes that the fast spread of information through digital and social media

channels poses serious threats for organizations' capacity to check information, resulting in the likelihood of being influenced by misleading data and damaging organizations' reputations. In a similar way, Matthew Seeger (2020) states that digital media made communication harder for organizations, but the core issue here is the lack of capability of organizations to react to a situation and communicate effectively.

Another issue that is commonly covered in the literature is the connection between organizations and media outlets. According to Seeger (2020), low levels of trust between journalists and organizations lead to negative media framing, especially in cases where organizations tend to withhold or not disclose some information. Similarly, Linjuan Rita Men and Shannon A. Bowen (2022) maintain that ineffective stakeholder management undermines the relationship with the media and makes people less confident during crises. Nevertheless, this research gives more attention to the issues related to organizational communication rather than to the framing efforts made by journalists. Therefore, successful media relations presuppose the existence of trust and cooperation between organizations and media professionals.

Academic researchers also cite lack of adequate crisis preparedness as another significant barrier to successful media relations. As argued by Men and Bowen (2022), there is generally a lack of adequately trained communicators, crisis communication plans, and procedures for working with the media in many organizations. Likewise, Robert Ulmer, Timothy Sellnow, and Seeger (2022) note that lack of a crisis communication system makes it hard for many organizations to have consistent responses to media requests. Although these scholars concur on the need for crisis preparedness, there is limited empirical data provided regarding the development of communication capacity among resource-constrained organizations.

Other aspects, such as legal, ethical, and organizational constraints, also add to media relations during crises. According to Ulmer, Sellnow, and Seeger (2022), the fact that there are certain issues related to confidentiality and legal inquiry might make it impossible for an organization to share all information, which will decrease transparency. However, according to Coombs (2021), an organization should still try to remain open in its communications despite any legal constraints. Thus, this comparison shows how an organization needs to balance legality and transparency.

Resource constraints and communication overload continue to be key hindrances to effective media relations. According to Seeger (2020), organizations which are resource-constrained financially, technologically, and in terms of personnel usually find it difficult to establish sustained communication with the media during crisis situations. It has also been noted recently that the increased number of communication channels has created additional burden for communication professionals who are expected to engage with different media channels simultaneously. However, despite being aware of these challenges, most of the existing literature has concentrated mostly on the large organizations and those established in developed nations. Very few studies have focused on the problems related to media relations in the community media organizations based in resource-scarce environment. There is also a lack of literature which deals specifically with media relations problems at Ugandan media organizations.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the research methodology that will be employed to explore the use of media relations in crisis management is explained. The research method, study area, population of the study, sample size and sampling techniques, data collection instruments and procedures, data analysis procedure, ethical issues, study limitations and delimitations and research budget are highlighted in this section.

3.1 Research Design

Descriptive research was used in conducting the research to establish the role of media relations in crisis management. The use of descriptive research is the best because it allows the researcher to systematically describe and analyze the way organizations conduct their media relations in the time of crisis and the effect of the strategies used on the results of the crisis like public perception and organizational reputation.

The research made use of a mixed methods approach involving both qualitative and quantitative methods. The use of the quantitative method gave the researcher an opportunity to gather numeric data on the perception of respondents on the effectiveness of media relations in the process of crisis management. On the other hand, the use of the qualitative approach gave the researcher in-depth information from the communication professionals and public relations officers on media relations.

3.2 Study Area

The research was done on a chosen media relations firm that has undergone crisis events where media relations were required to be used actively. The company was chosen because it offers an appropriate setting where media relations can be examined in crisis management.

3.3 Study Population and Sample Size

A sample size of 61 respondents selected as shown below

Category of Respondents	Sample Size	Sampling Method
Employees/Stakeholders	60	Simple Random Sampling
Communication Officers	1	Purposive Sampling
Total	61	

3.4 Sampling Methods

The study employed both simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques.

Simple Random Sampling

The simple random sampling technique was adopted to choose the employees and stakeholders as well as the communications officer. The use of this technique makes it possible for everyone to have an equal probability of being chosen.

Purposive Sampling

Sampling technique adopted in this research is purposive sampling. Selected respondents include communication officers, public relations professionals and head of department of organizations. The selection of these respondents was due to the reason that they have specific knowledge and experience in media and crisis management.

3.5 Sources of Data

Data was gathered by conducting surveys, interviews, and discussions with the respondents in order to collect primary data. Through this approach, it is guaranteed that data collected is up-to-date and pertinent, as it directly pertains to media relations in crisis management.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

3.6.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaires were distributed to both the staff members and the stakeholders for gathering quantitative information. The questionnaires consisted of both closed-ended questions as well as a few open-ended questions pertaining to media relations practices, effective communication, organizational communication trust, and crisis management. The use of questionnaires is ideal since information can be gathered from many respondents quickly.

3.6.2 Interview Guide

Media relations methods used in times of crises were explored through semi-structured interviews with communicators, public relations practitioners, and heads

of departments in organizations. Questions on media relations in times of crisis, communication challenges, journalists' interactions, and the efficacy of media engagement in crisis management were asked.

The semi-structured nature of interviews helped the researcher gain more insight on responses and qualitative data.

3.6.3 Focus Group Discussion Guide

Discussions among focus groups were carried out with selected stakeholders and employees to obtain an insight into how they perceive media relations in crisis situations.

The discussions included 8-10 members. This method is very effective in generating interactive discussions about media relations and their effect on public perception and crisis situations.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher secured an introduction letter to the university before carrying out the research. The next step was obtaining permission from the chosen organization.

After that, the researcher carried out the survey, interview, and discussion through focus groups. Before taking part in the process, the respondents were made aware of the objectives of the research and their confidentiality was assured.

The questionnaires were collected, and the information from interviews and discussions was recorded and transcribed.

3.8 Data Analysis, Presentation, and Interpretation

3.8.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Questionnaires provided quantitative data that was analyzed by descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, and means. The findings were then presented through tables, graphs, and charts to reveal trends in media relations and crisis communications.

3.8.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Analysis of the qualitative data was done through thematic content analysis of interview and focus group discussion data. The data collected, coded and arranged in themes such as media strategies, communication, trust, misinformation and crisis management among others before being analyzed in regard to the research objectives.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent. All subjects were informed about the research purpose and voluntarily agreed to be included in the research.

Confidentiality and Privacy. The identities of the respondents were not revealed, and all information was kept confidential.

Voluntary Participation. Participation in the research was completely voluntary, and the subjects could refuse to take part in the research at any moment without any penalty.

Respect for Participants. The researcher was professional and respectful towards the respondents.

Minimization of Harm. No physical, emotional or psychological harm to the respondents was caused by the research.

Integrity and Honesty. All information obtained was used exclusively for academic purposes.

3.10 Limitations of the Study

Some of the interviewees may feel shy in giving any form of information regarding media relations strategies because of the confidential nature of the information.

Financial problems might arise concerning the transportation, printing, and communication processes in the data collection process.

Time problems might arise due to academic engagements.

This study was delimited to the role of media relations in crisis management in the organization under study only and did not focus on other modes of communication.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the results of the study on Media Relations in Crisis Management are discussed. The data obtained from the respondents has been analyzed, presented, and interpreted using tables, frequencies, and percentages. The results are discussed in line with the objectives of the study, which are;

- To investigate the media relations practices that are employed in crisis management.
- To determine the extent to which media relations contribute to crisis management.
- To determine the challenges that organizations face in terms of maintaining effective media relations during crisis situations.
- To propose some solutions to the identified challenges of media relations in crisis management.

The results are based on the data obtained from selected respondents who gave information on the importance of media relations in maintaining effective communication during crisis management.

4.1 Demographic information of the respondents

The study was conducted on selected respondents in media relations and crisis communication. There were a total of 40 respondents who took part in the study. Demographic variables that were taken into account include gender, age,

educational level, and professional background. The demographic variables helped the researcher identify whether the respondents could offer relevant information in media relations and crisis management.

4.1.1 Gender/Sex distribution of respondents

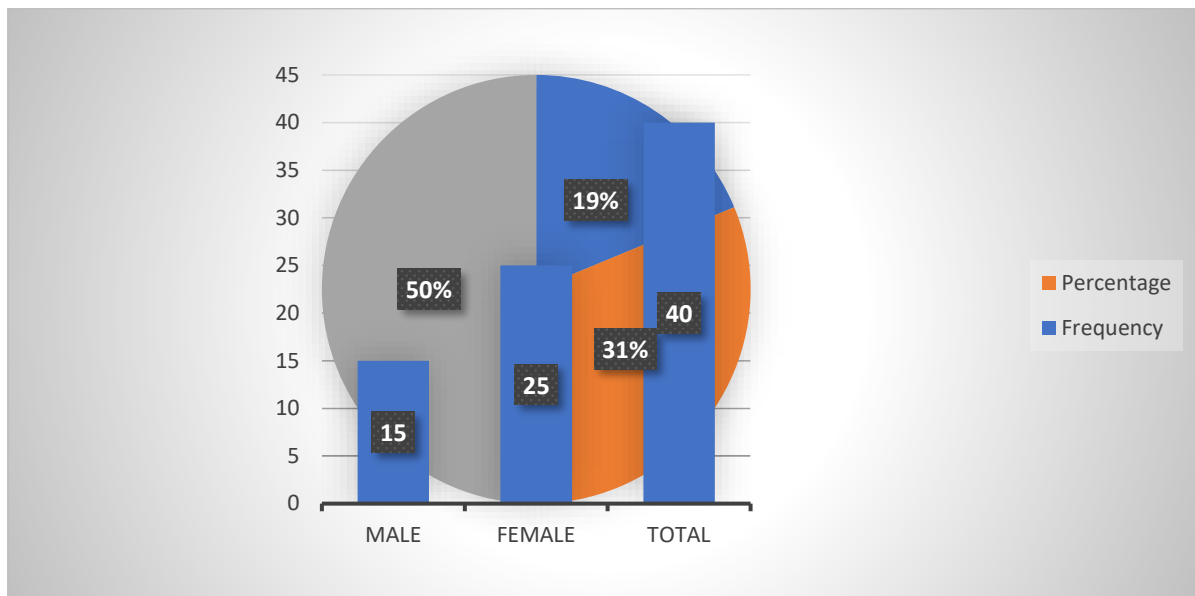
Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	15	37.5%
Female	25	62.5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Data, 2026

It is evident from Table 1 presented above that both genders were included in the research process while collecting data. It was found that females made up the larger percentage of the respondents at 62.5%, whereas males made up 37.5%. This means that women were actively participating in giving information related to media relations and crisis management.

The graph showing the Gender Distribution of Respondents



Above is the gender distribution of the participants who took part in the study. The results show that the females were the most in the number making up 62.5%, which is 25 respondents while the male respondents made up 37.5%, which is 15 respondents. It was evident that there were more females participating in the study than males. Nonetheless, the participation of both gender gave diverse perspectives on media relations in crisis management.

4.1.2 Age Distribution of respondents

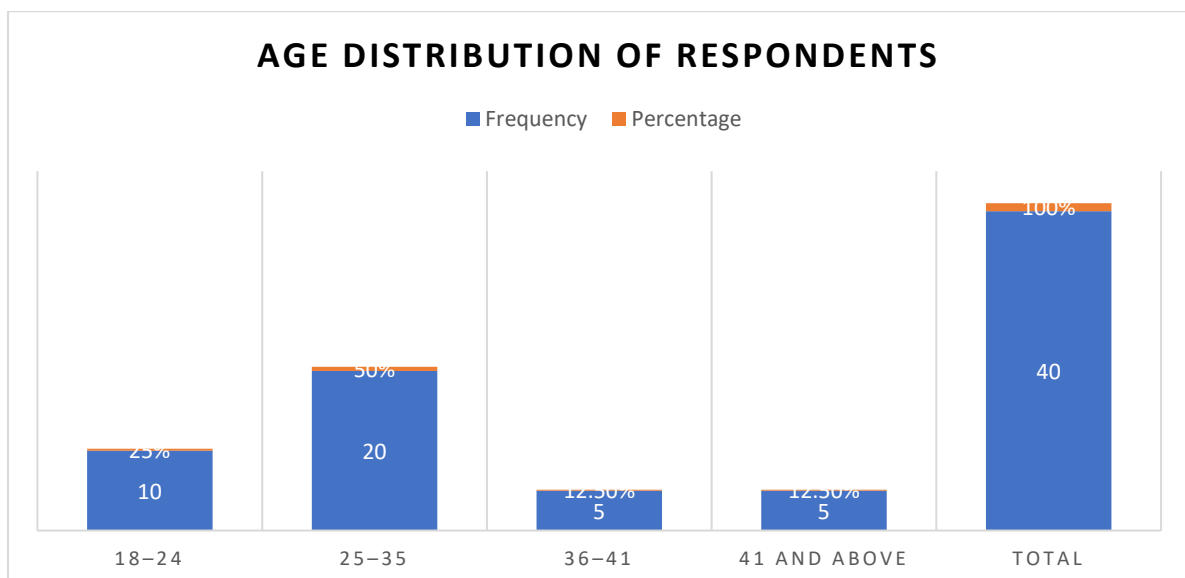
The researcher asked respondents to indicate their age categories, and their responses were summarized as shown below.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18-24	10	25%
25-35	20	50%
36-41	5	12.5%
41 and above	5	12.5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Data, 2026

According to Table 2, the highest number of respondents were between the ages of 25-35 years, accounting for 50% of the total respondents. After this came respondents between the ages of 18-24 years, accounting for 25%. Respondents between the ages of 36-41 and over 41 years each accounted for 12.5%. The results suggest that the majority of respondents were of working age, which meant that they had experience in communication and crisis management practices.



The graph represents the age structure of respondents. According to the results, it was found that the highest number of respondents, which is 20 (50%) falls into the age category of 25-35 years old. Following that, there were 10 (25%) respondents who fell into the age category of 18-24 years. There were 5 respondents (12.5%) in the age category of 36-41 years old and 5 respondents (12.5%) in the age category of 41 and above.

4.1.3 Level of Education of Respondents

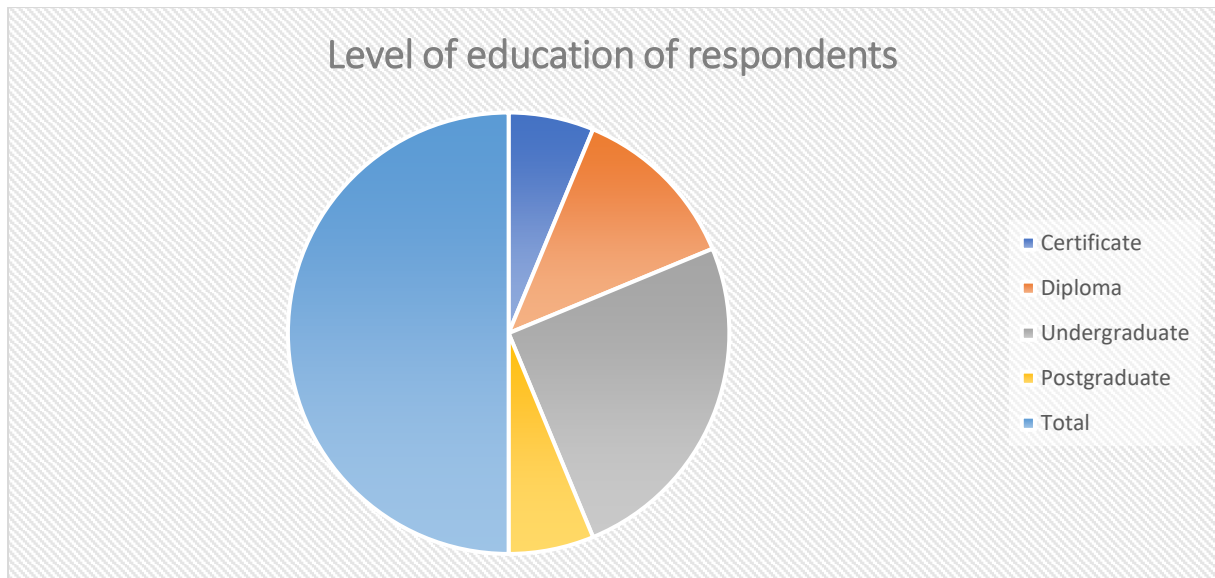
The researcher took into account the educational background of the respondent since education affects the perception and interpretation of media relations and crisis communication.

Table 3: Level of education of respondents

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Certificate	5	12.5%
Diploma	10	25%
Undergraduate	20	50%
Postgraduate	5	12.5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Data, 2026

From the above Table 3, it is clear that 50% of the respondents had an undergraduate degree, 25% had a diploma degree, 12.5% held certificates, and 12.5% had postgraduate degrees.



It was found that a large number of respondents had achieved high educational qualifications, enabling them to express their views on media relations and crisis management. The reason behind giving importance to those respondents who had achieved higher educational qualifications was the understanding of communication techniques and stakeholder management by them.

4.1.4 Professional background of respondents

Professional background was also an important variable for the researcher as people who work in the field of communication have knowledge and experience regarding media relations.

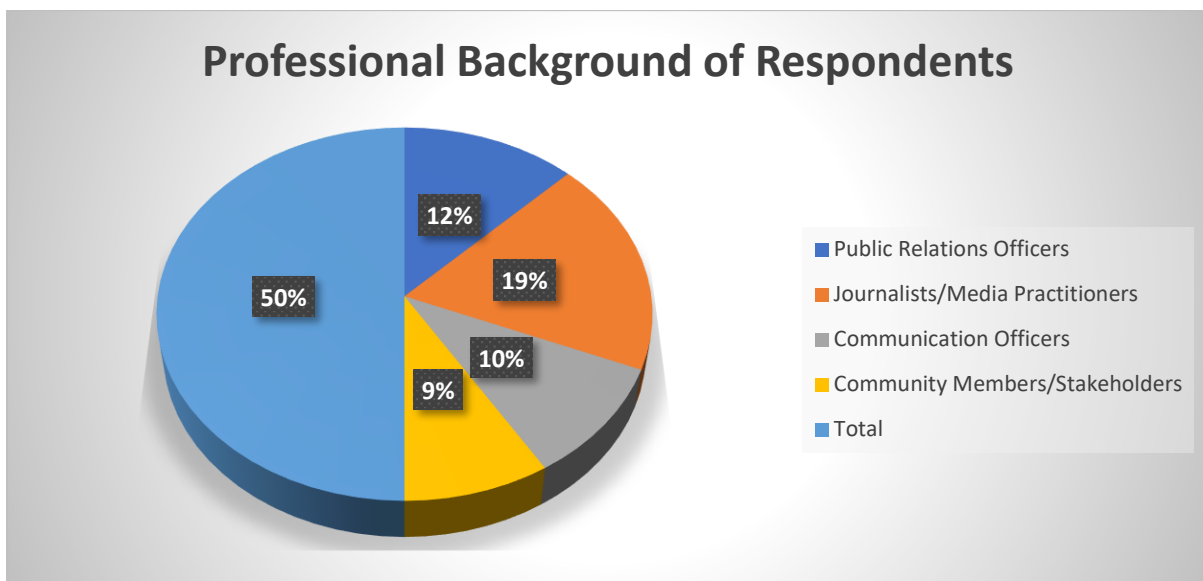
Table 4: Professional Background of Respondents

Professional Category	Frequency	Percentage
Public Relations Officers	10	25%
Journalists/Media Practitioners	15	37.5%
Communication Officers	8	20%

Community Members/Stakeholders	7	17.5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Data, 2026

From Table 4, the largest group of respondents was the journalists/media practitioners at 37.5%, while PR officers came second with 25%, followed by communication officers at 20% and community members/stakeholders at 17.5%.



Having the respondents from various professional groups contributed to the varied outlooks on media relations within crisis management. Journalists and communications specialists were significant because they are involved in the process of information collection, distribution, and exchange with organizations in the course of crises.

4.2 Media relations strategies used in crisis management

The first research objective was to analyze the media relations techniques utilized by organizations for crisis management. Participants were required to answer whether organizations use different media relations techniques for successful crisis management.

4.2.1 Use of press releases during crisis situations

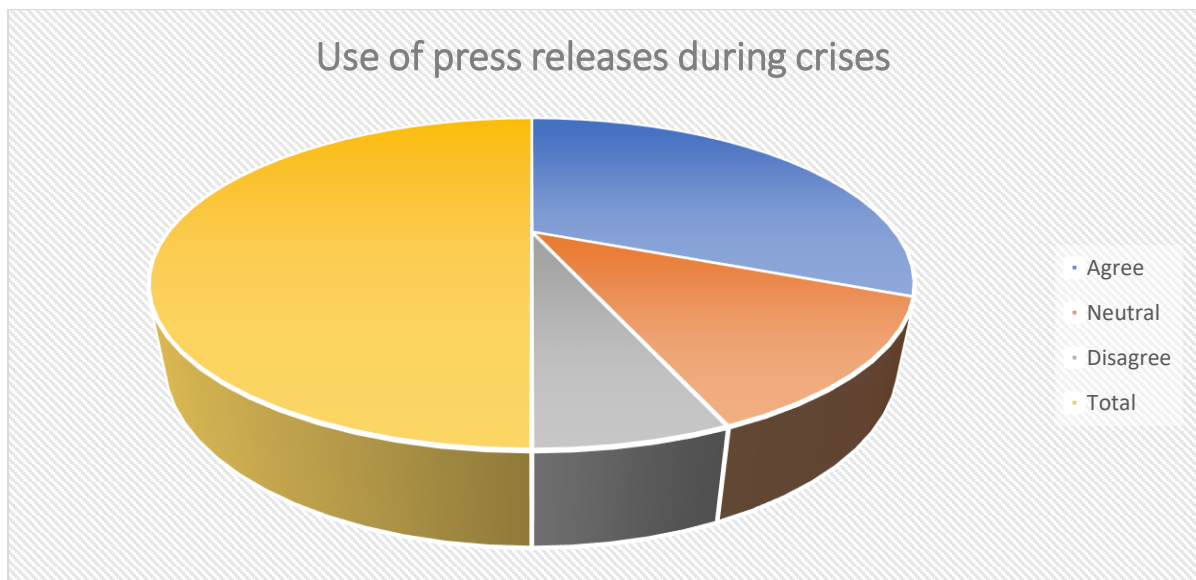
The researcher asked respondents whether organizations use press releases as a strategy for communicating with the media during crises.

Table 5: Use of press releases during crises

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	25	62.5%
Neutral	10	25%
Disagree	5	12.5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Data, 2026

As indicated by the results obtained in Table 5, 62.5% of the participants believed that companies use press release as a media relations approach in crisis situations. On the other hand, 25% remained neutral, while 12.5% disagreed with the statement.



The chart is the breakdown of the respondents' view about the issue. The majority of respondents agreed with the statement while fewer respondents were either neutral or disagreeing with the statement. Generally, from the findings, it can be concluded that the respondents viewed the issue positively.

4.2.2 Use of press conferences and media briefings

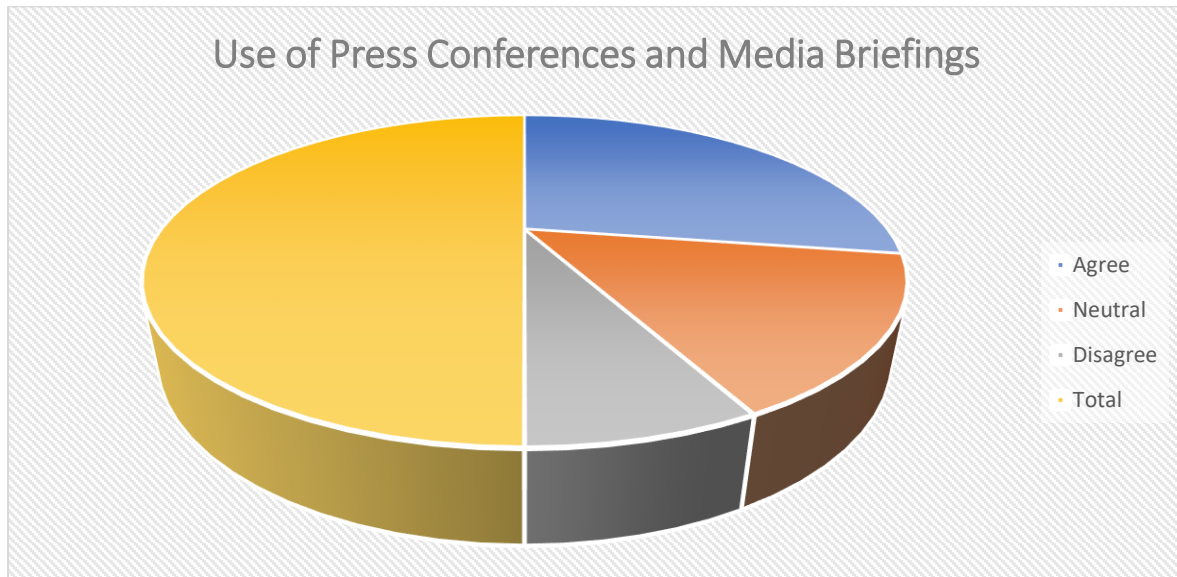
The researcher sought to establish whether organizations conduct press conferences and media briefings during crisis situations.

Table 6: Use of Press Conferences and Media Briefings

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	22	55%
Neutral	12	30%
Disagree	6	15%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Data, 2026

From the table 6 shown above, 55% of the respondents indicated their agreement that organizations utilize press conferences and media briefing in times of crises, 30% were neutral while 15% disagreed.



4.2.3 Use of social media platforms for crisis communication

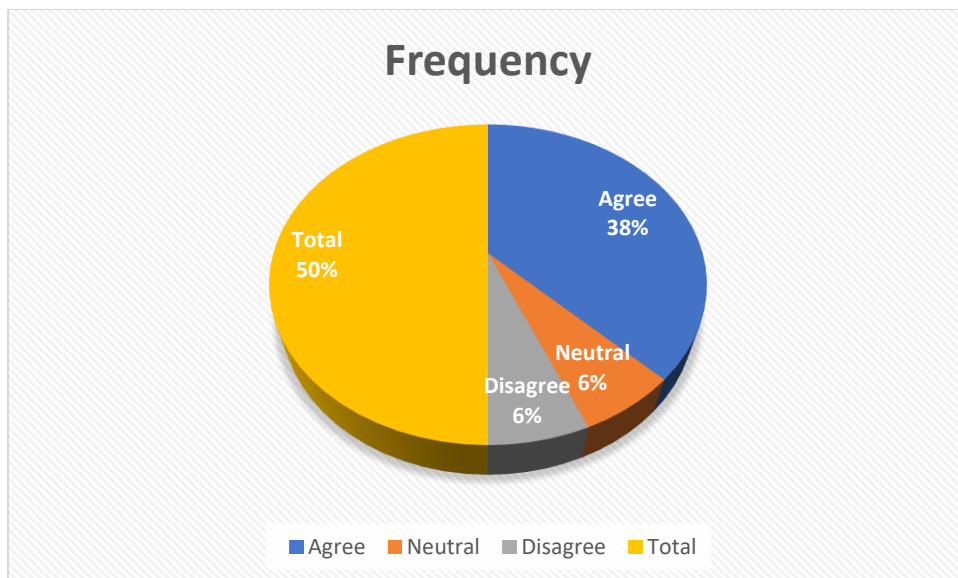
The researcher explored whether organizations use social media as part of their media relations strategy in times of crisis.

Table 7: Use of social media during crisis management

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	30	75%
Neutral	5	12.5%
Disagree	5	12.5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Data, 2026

The results reveal that 75% of respondents agreed that organizations utilize social media sites during crisis management. 12.5% were neutral, whereas 12.5% disagreed.



In the pie chart, one can see that 38% of the respondents agreed to the statement, meaning that this was the prevailing view among them. 6% of the respondents were neutral, while another 6% disagreed. Thus, the conclusion one can make is that few respondents were either neutral or had an opposite view on the issue.

4.2.4 Stakeholder engagement through media relations

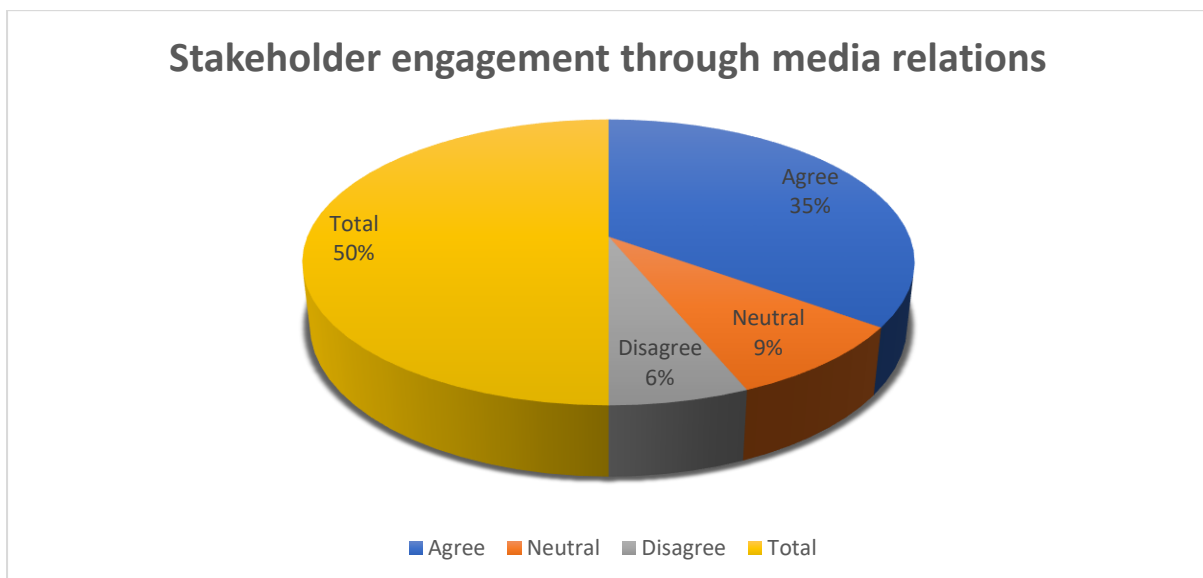
The researcher wanted to determine if organizations use media relations to engage stakeholders in crisis situations. It is crucial for the organizations to engage the stakeholders since it enables the organizations to get public feedback and respond to the same.

Table 8: Stakeholder engagement through media relations

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	28	70%
Neutral	7	17.5%
Disagree	5	12.5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Data, 2026

It is noted from Table 8 below that the results show that 70% of respondents agree that organizations apply media relations to communicate with stakeholders during crises. Neutral respondents were 17.5% and 12.5% disagree.



4.2.5 Maintaining good relationships with journalists

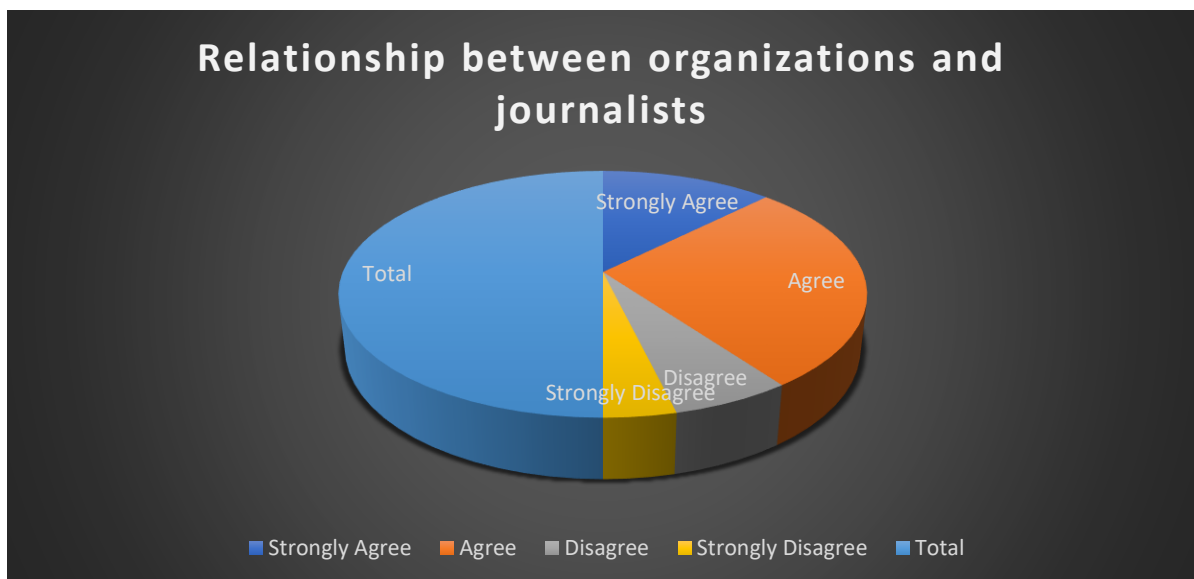
The researcher asked respondents whether maintaining good relationships with journalists helps organizations manage crises effectively.

Table 9: Relationship between organizations and journalists

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	10	25%
Agree	22	55%
Disagree	5	12.5%
Strongly Disagree	3	7.5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Data, 2026

As shown in Table 9, 55% of the respondents agreed that good relationship with journalists is necessary to manage organizational crisis, whereas 25% strongly agreed. Nonetheless, 12.5% disagreed and 7.5% strongly disagreed with the statement.



As shown by the pie chart above, most of the people questioned accepted the statement, followed by those who strongly accepted it, showing that there is a positive attitude towards the problem being discussed. The few others were those

who either did not agree or strongly disagreed, showing that there are a few negative attitudes towards the problem being discussed.

4.3 Contribution of Media Relations in Crisis Management

The second research aim was to determine the role played by media relations in crisis management. The participants were required to specify the way in which media relations influence successful crisis management.

4.3.1 Media relations help in controlling misinformation

The researcher examined whether media relations help organizations control misinformation during crises.

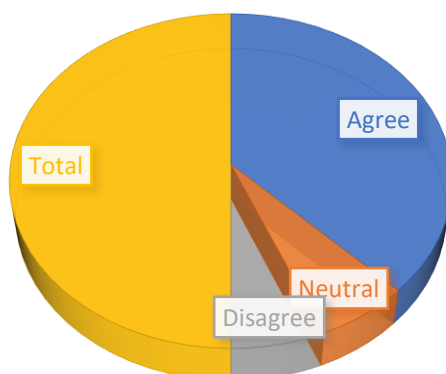
Table 10: Media relations and control of misinformation

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	30	75%
Neutral	5	12.5%
Disagree	5	12.5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Data, 2026

According to the results presented in Table 10, 75% of the respondents felt that media relations aid organizations in controlling misinformation during crises. 12.5% were neutral, and 12.5% disagreed.

MEDIA RELATIONS AND CONTROL OF MISINFORMATION



4.3.2 Media Relations promote transparency and public trust

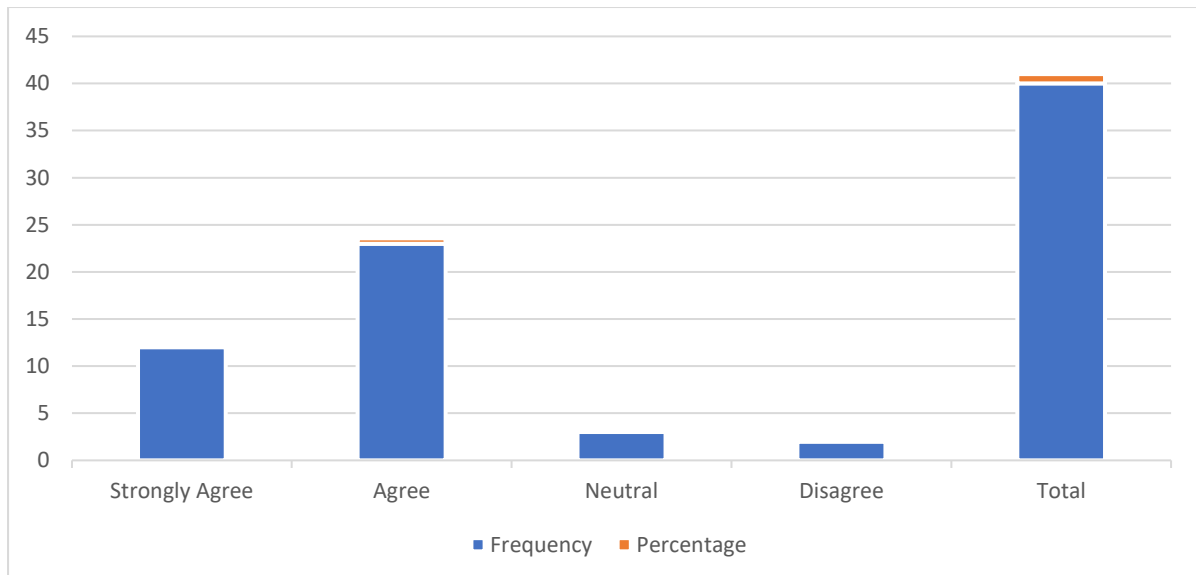
The researcher sought to determine whether media relations promote transparency and public trust during crises.

Table 11: Media Relations and Public Trust

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	12	30%
Agree	23	57.5%
Neutral	3	7.5%
Disagree	2	5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Data, 2026

From Table 11, it is observed that 57.5% of the respondents felt that media relations generate trust amongst the public whereas 30% strongly agreed with this fact.



The graph illustrates that the largest number of people agreed with the statement while a small percentage strongly agreed with it; therefore, there was generally a positive perception towards the issue under study. A minority of the respondents were not in agreement or strongly agreed with the statement under study, hence very few negative perceptions towards the issue under study.

4.3.3 Media relations support reputation protection

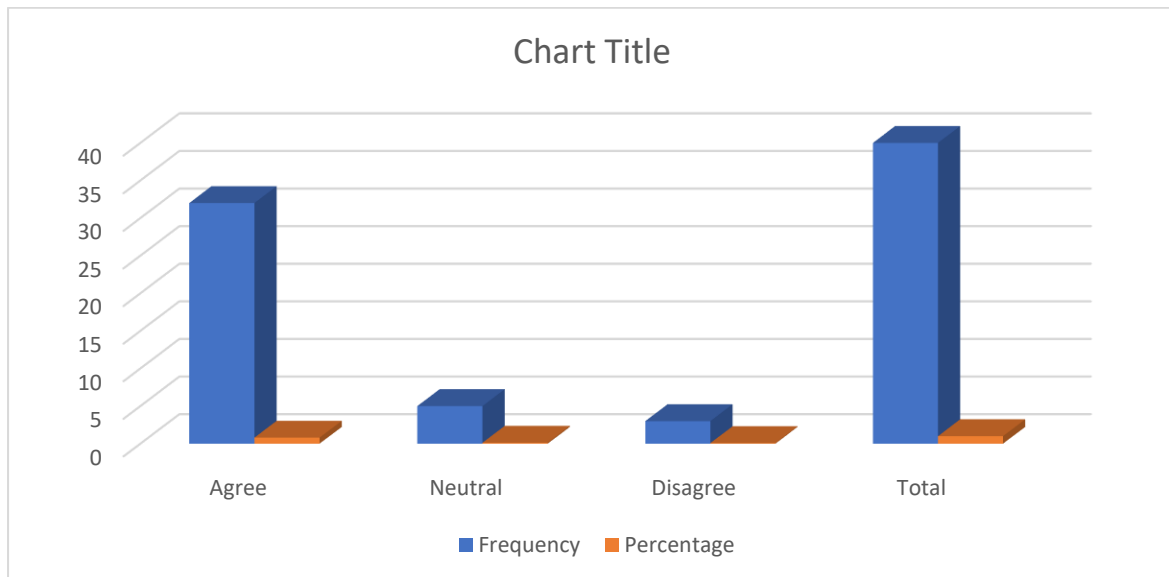
The researcher examined whether media relations contribute to protecting organizational reputation during crises.

Table 12: Media Relations and Organizational Reputation

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	32	80%
Neutral	5	12.5%
Disagree	3	7.5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Data, 2026

The findings show that **80%** of respondents agreed that media relations help protect organizational reputation during crises. **12.5%** were neutral, while **7.5%** disagreed.



As per the pie chart, the majority of people were in agreement with the statement, while others had a strong agreement, reflecting a positive attitude towards the issue being considered. A lesser percentage of people had a disagreement and a strong disagreement, which shows a limited negative attitude. In summary, it can be said that people had a favorable attitude towards the issue.

4.4 Challenges faced by media relations practitioners in crisis management

The third aim of the research is to establish the challenges that media relations officers have to contend with in crisis management. The subjects were required to specify the main challenges that pose problems to media relations during crises.

4.4.1 Limited funding for media relations activities

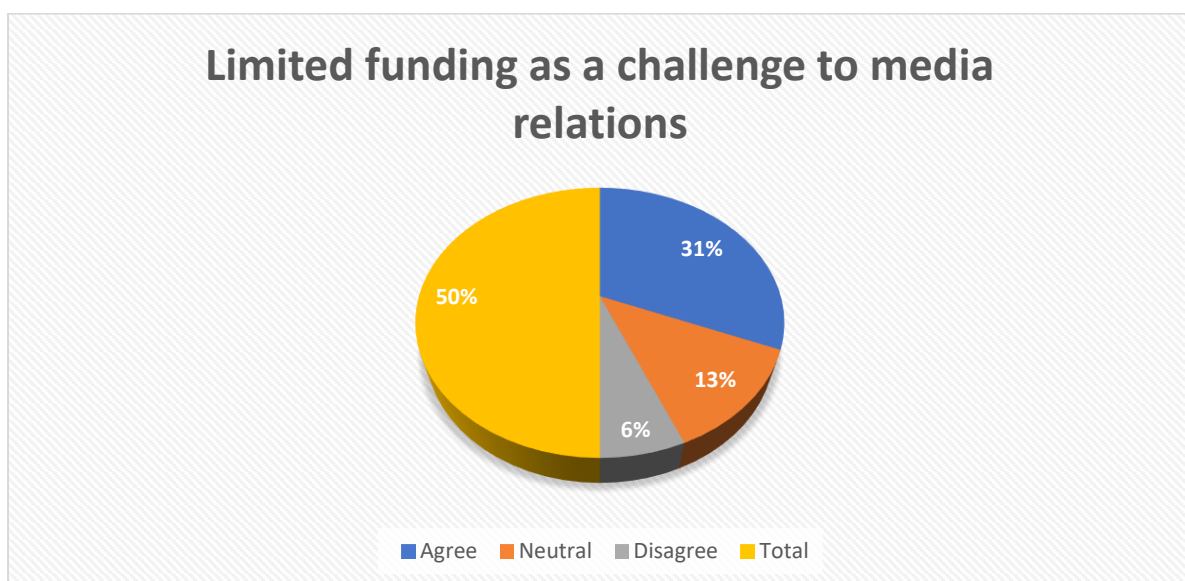
The researcher tried to establish whether limited financial resources constrain media relations efforts in crisis management.

Table 13: Limited funding as a challenge to media relations

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	25	62.5%
Neutral	10	25%
Disagree	5	12.5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Data, 2026

From Table 13, it is evident that 62.5% of the participants believe that budget constraints have an impact on media relations during emergencies, whereas 25% were neutral and 12.5% disagreed.



4.4.2 Lack of trained media relations personnel

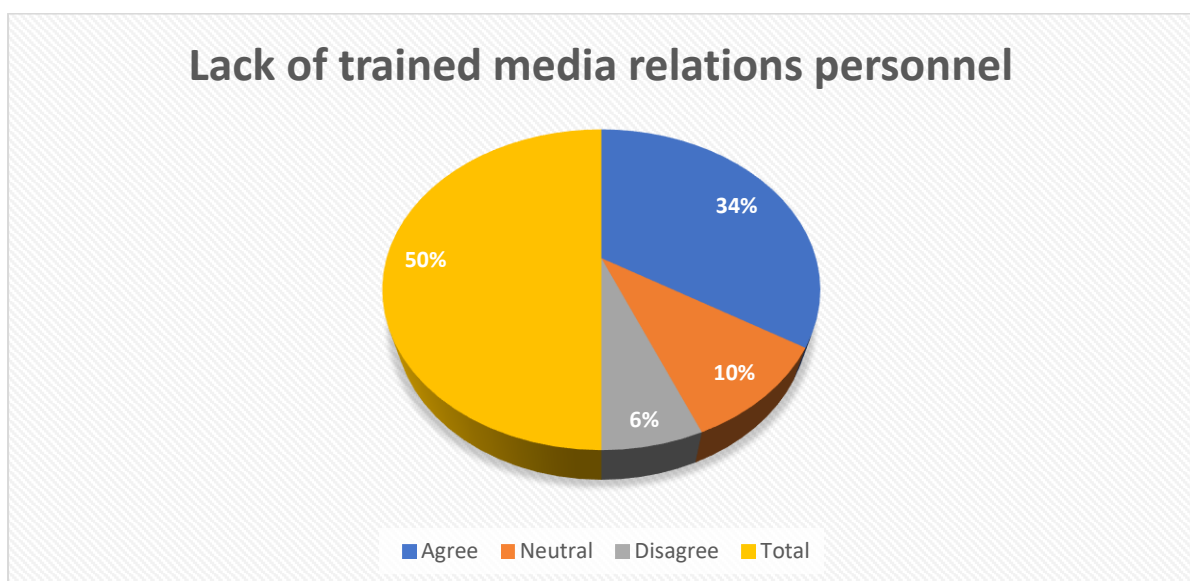
The researcher asked respondents whether lack of trained communication personnel affects crisis management.

Table 14: Lack of trained media relations personnel

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	27	67.5%
Neutral	8	20%
Disagree	5	12.5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Data, 2026

From the results shown in Table 14, 67.5% of the respondents agree that inadequate trained media relations people is an issue, while 20% were neutral and 12.5% disagreed.



Results imply that certain organizations encounter problems due to inadequate skills of communication officers in handling crises, media, and reputation management. Lack of professional competence may lead to delayed reaction to a situation and inappropriate communication strategy.

4.4.3 Delayed release of information during crises

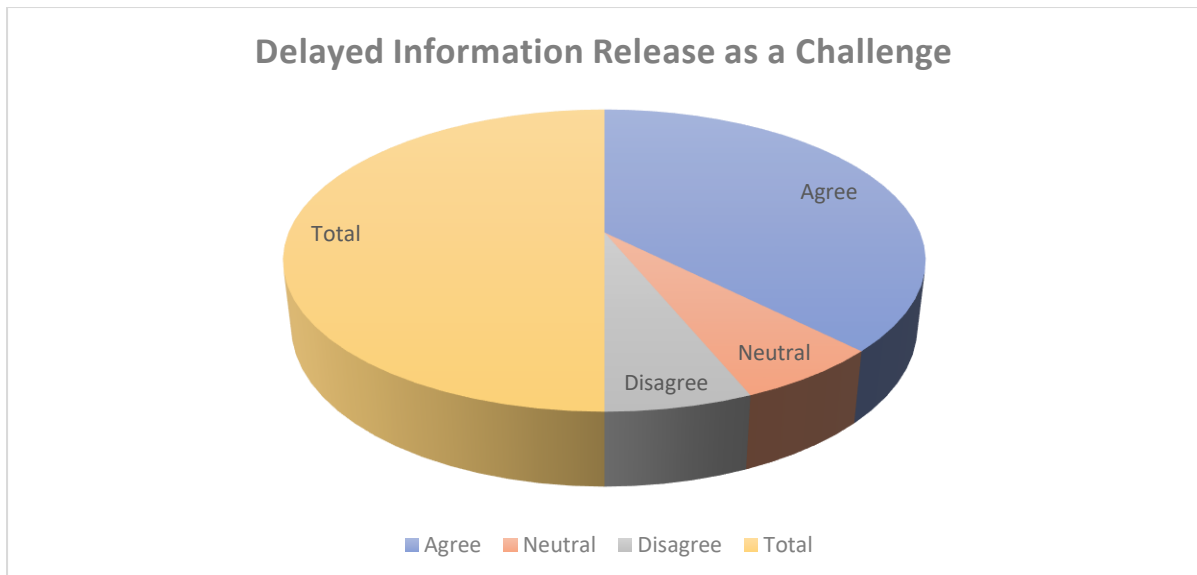
The researcher examined whether delays in releasing information affect crisis communication.

Table 15: Delayed Information Release as a Challenge

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	30	75%
Neutral	5	12.5%
Disagree	5	12.5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Data, 2026

As per Table 15, 75% of the participants felt that late dissemination of information was one of the biggest challenges in crises. 12.5% participants were neutral on this issue, whereas 12.5% participants disagreed with this statement.



Results indicate that delay in communication gives rise to rumours and misinformation. The respondents stressed the fact that the organizations must be able to communicate timely and reliably to make sure that the stakeholders receive proper information.

4.4.4 Misinformation and social media challenges

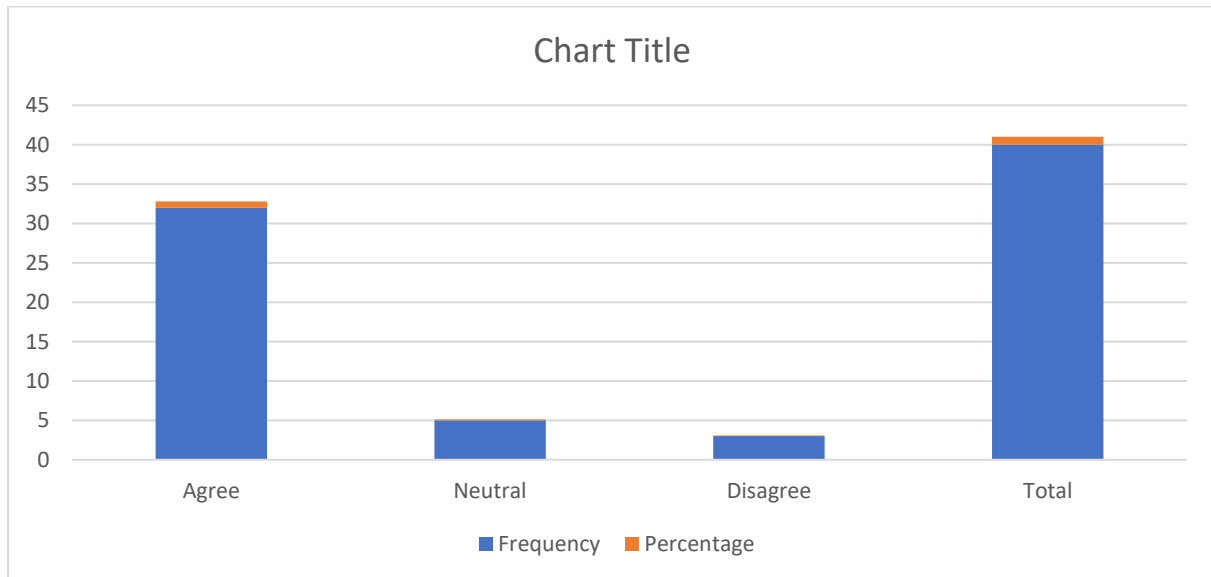
The researcher sought to establish whether misinformation spread through social media affects media relations during crises.

Table 16: Social media misinformation as a challenge

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	32	80%
Neutral	5	12.5%
Disagree	3	7.5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Data, 2026

As is shown in Table 16, 80% of respondents agreed that social media misinformation presents obstacles to media relations in crisis situations. 12.5% of respondents were neutral and 7.5% of respondents disagreed.



It is evident from the results obtained that social media has accelerated the spread of information, making it hard for organizations to control false information. Participants indicated that organizations need to continuously monitor the information on online platforms and act quickly against misinformation.

4.5 Solutions for improving media relations in crisis management

Fourth, the study aimed at suggesting the measures that could be adopted by the organization in order to enhance media relations during crisis management. Some of the strategies put forward by the respondents included.

4.5.1 Training media relations practitioners

The researcher asked respondents whether regular training of communication officers can improve crisis management.

Table 17: Training of media relations practitioners

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	35	87.5%
Neutral	3	7.5%
Disagree	2	5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Data, 2026

Table 17 demonstrates that 87.5% of the respondents were of the view that media relations practitioners' training enhances crisis management, 7.5% had a neutral view, and 5% disagreed.

It is evident from the results obtained that consistent training provides the communication officer with the ability to deal with crisis response, media relations, ethical communication, and information management. Trained practitioners can respond efficiently to crisis situations.

4.5.2 Development of crisis communication policies

The researcher examined whether organizations should establish clear crisis communication policies.

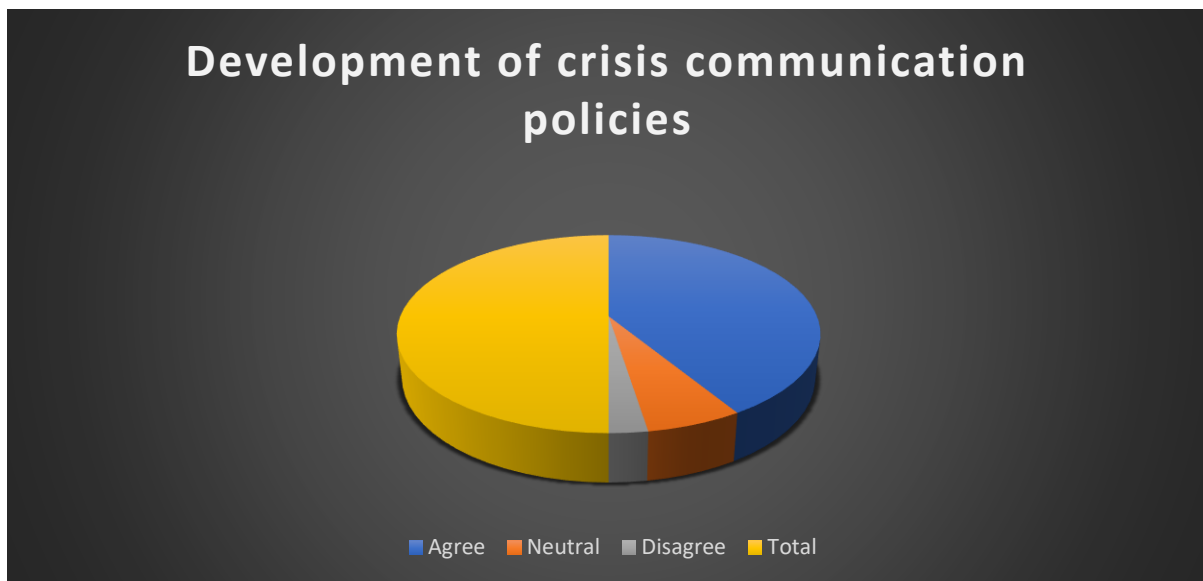
Table 18: Crisis communication policies

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	33	82.5%
Neutral	5	12.5%

Disagree	2	5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Data, 2026

The findings indicate that **82.5%** of respondents agreed that crisis communication policies are necessary, while **12.5%** were neutral and **5%** disagreed.



From the findings, it can be seen that having proper communication policies is important in helping to set up the responsibilities, means of communication, and procedures to use in case of emergencies.

4.5.3 Investment in modern communication technologies

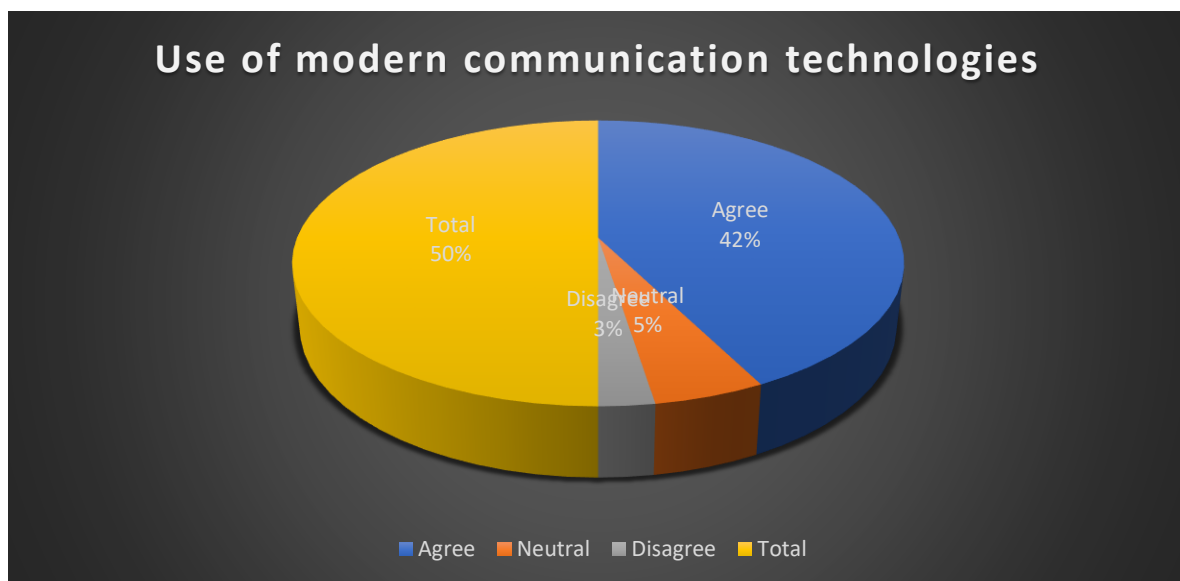
The researcher asked respondents whether organizations should invest in digital communication technologies to improve media relations.

Table 19: Use of modern communication technologies

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	34	85%
Neutral	4	10%
Disagree	2	5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Data, 2026

The findings show that 85% of respondents agreed that organizations should invest in modern communication technologies. 10% were neutral, while 5% disagreed.



It is evident from the findings that digital platforms can help organizations share information rapidly, interact with stakeholders, monitor their reactions and counter disinformation.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter covered the analysis and interpretation of findings on Media Relations in Crisis Management. The findings showed that organizations employ different media relations tactics such as press releases, press conferences, social media interactions, and stakeholder communications. Media relations have been found to play a key role in managing misinformation, ensuring transparency, and defending organizational reputation in crisis management.

On the other hand, factors such as inadequate funding, lack of competent staff, delayed information dissemination, and social media misinformation have hindered successful crisis management. The study has provided solutions such as training communication officials, having crisis communication policies, and media

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The discussion on the findings, conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further research for the study titled “Media Relations in Crisis Management in Kabale District” will be contained in this chapter. The discussion will follow the objectives

of the study as well as comparing the findings with those of other scholars that have been reviewed in the literature review chapter.

5.1 Discussion of the Findings

5.1.1 The Role of Media Relations in Crisis Management

Objective number one of the study involved exploring the role of media relations in crisis management in Kabale district. The results showed that media relations play a key role in ensuring effective communication during crises. Most respondents were in agreement that organizations with good media relations can effectively communicate accurate and reliable information to the public during times of crisis.

Furthermore, the results show that media relations facilitate transparency, minimize misinformation, and instill confidence among the public during crises. It was noted that the media act as a vital channel for the dissemination of information regarding the activities of organizations during times of crisis. This result is consistent with the claim by Coombs (2015), according to whom effective crisis communication requires quick and honest communication through the media.

In addition, it was discovered that organizations within Kabale District utilize different forms of media such as radio, TV, newspaper, and digital media as a means of transmitting messages about a crisis situation. These channels of communication help organizations to connect with different types of stakeholders in order to avoid panic among the general public.

In the same way, Fearn-Banks (2017) explains that the media are key players in crisis communication as they assist in the exchange of information between an

organization and its stakeholders. Building good relations with the media before, during, and after a crisis helps an organization to maintain its reputation.

Additionally, the study reveals that organizations that involve the media during crises will be supported by the general public compared to those that do not release information to the media. This shows how important the theory of two-way symmetrical communication developed by Grunig & Hunt (1984) is in crisis management.

5.1.2 The effectiveness of media relations strategies during crisis management

The second aim focused on the analysis of media relations strategies used during the process of managing crises. The results proved that there are a number of media relations strategies that organizations employ to communicate during crises. These include press release, press conference, media interview, social media update, and stakeholder briefings.

The most of participants believed that fast information dissemination is the most effective strategy of crisis management. According to the participants, the provision of timely information contributes to the prevention of rumors, speculation and misunderstanding which may complicate the situation even more. This result coincides with the ideas of Coombs (2015), who suggests that timely response of organizations to the crisis situations increases chances to avoid misunderstanding and saves reputation of the organization.

In addition, it was also concluded that media relations become more efficient due to transparency and consistency of the communication. Participants mentioned that

provision of the truth and consistent information is viewed as an indicator of trustworthiness of organizations.

The other key strategies highlighted by the respondents involved the use of social media sites to offer real-time updates. Communication through digital sites like Facebook, X, WhatsApp and websites used by the organizations made it possible for immediate communication with the large audience. This is in accordance with the assertions put forward by Fearn-Banks (2017), where digital communication has changed the face of crisis management, making it possible for rapid communication of messages to the stakeholders.

In addition, it was noted by the respondents that organizations having spokespersons in place communicated better in crisis situations compared to those without spokespersons. Properly trained spokespersons help maintain consistency and prevent contradictions of the message.

Overall, it can be seen that media relations strategies make a significant contribution to effective crisis management.

5.1.3 Challenges affecting media relations in crisis management

Objective three aimed at determining the challenges facing media relations in crisis management in the district of Kabale. It has been found out that despite the importance of media relations, there are challenges that impede their efficiency in times of crisis.

Firstly, the study found out that delay in information is one of the major challenges faced in crisis communication. According to the respondents, delay in official communication through bureaucratic approval processes results into spreading of

rumors and wrong information before the right information becomes available to the public. This is in line with what Coombs (2015) says about how delay in communication affects the credibility of the organization during the time of crisis.

One of the other major challenges identified in this study is misinformation and fake news especially in social media platforms.

The results have also pointed out that insufficient media training amongst PR professionals impacts on the effectiveness of communication. Several respondents mentioned the problem of ineffective skills of communication officers in dealing with media interviews, crisis messaging, and answering difficult questions posed by journalists. Cutlip et al. (2006) also emphasize the role of professional communication skills in good media relations.

Insufficient finances was another issue raised by respondents. They mentioned that some companies do not have enough money to organize press conferences, create communication materials, or conduct any media campaign at all in cases of crisis situation. Consequently, the quality of communication is poor.

It was also found that the lack of cooperation between organizations and media houses leads to conflicting information in case of emergency. Respondents stressed that it is important to work well together with journalists in order to achieve successful communication. This finding is in line with Grunig and Hunt (1984), who claim that mutual understanding and cooperation between organization and media lead to better communication results.

In summary, the study finds that even though media relations are crucial in crisis management, their impact is hindered by late communication, miscommunication,

lack of proper training of professionals, lack of enough funds, and lack of cooperation between the organization and the media. Solving these problems will definitely enhance crisis communication in Kabale District.

5.2 Summary of the findings

The study sought to examine media relations in crisis management in Kabale District.

The findings were summarized according to the study objectives as follows:

5.2.1 The role of media relations in crisis management

It was concluded that media relations are key to successful crisis management. The results showed that organizations with positive media relations have more capabilities to deliver timely and reliable information during crises. It is evident that good media relations enable organizations to minimize uncertainty and correct misinterpretation of information. Furthermore, it has been established that traditional media outlets such as television, radio, and print, combined with digital media platforms, have played a great role in disseminating crisis information.

Additionally, the findings indicated that media relations promote transparency and accountability in the sense that there will be open communication between the organization and the general public during times of emergencies.

5.2.2 The effectiveness of media relations strategies in crisis management

The study reveals that some media relations activities can help in effective crisis management. These are issuance of press release, holding press conference, carrying out media interviews, engaging in social media communication, and updating stakeholders.

The respondents concurred that timely communication helps in reducing rumors and misinformation and fosters public trust. It was also found out in the study that consistent and honest communication by the organization results in gaining public support in times of crisis. In addition, it was established that having a trained spokesperson and communication team facilitates effective messaging.

Digital media have been found to be useful in crisis communication as it allows the organization to update the public and communicate directly with the communities affected.

5.2.3 Challenges affecting media relations in crisis management

The results showed various challenges that make it difficult to have efficient media relations in crisis management. The key challenges identified in the study included the delay in information dissemination, misinformation, lack of media relations skills by communication professionals, lack of finances, and the absence of coordination between organizations and media houses.

The respondents stated that the delay in disseminating information makes it easier for people to engage in speculation and the spreading of false information. Limited budget also limits the organization from engaging in media campaigns during crisis times. Lack of training also makes it difficult for the communication officer to deal with the journalist during the time of crisis.

Overall, the results show that even though media relations play a critical role in effective crisis management, there are various challenges that need to be addressed to enhance effective communication during crises.

5.3 Conclusions

The study finds out that media relations are a key component in the process of crisis management in Kabale district. Organizations with good media relations are able to communicate effectively in times of emergency and hence avoid misinformation, panic and destruction of their reputation.

The study also finds out that effective media relations practices such as communicating effectively and consistently, engaging the media on a regular basis, and communicating using digital communication technologies play a key role in the process of managing crisis situations.

The study also finds out that although media relations are key in managing crises situations, many challenges continue to make media relations ineffective. The challenges include delays in disseminating information, rapid spreading of misinformation on social media, poor communication skills of PR practitioners, lack of finances, and poor coordination between the organization and the journalist.

Consequently, the study recommends that media relationship practices need to be improved to ensure organizational readiness, build public confidence, and facilitate effective crisis management in Kabale District.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made to improve media relations in crisis management in Kabale District:

5.4.1 Strengthen media relations policies

Media relations policy development is important for organizations as this will guide them on how to communicate during crisis situations. Media relations policies should be clear on the procedures of communication before, during, and after the crisis.

5.4.2 Provide continuous training for public relations practitioners

Training in crisis communication, media relations, reputation management, and digital communication is important for public relations officers and communication personnel in organizations. It enhanced their effectiveness in communication and handling of media relations and crisis management issues.

5.4.3 Promote timely and accurate information dissemination

Organizations need to develop ways through which accurate and verified information is released very fast during times of crisis. Communication should not be delayed to avoid speculation and rumors that might further exacerbate the situation.

5.4.4 Enhance collaboration between organizations and media houses

Establishing positive relationship between organizations and journalists is imperative before any crisis erupts. This is because such good relationships would result in better coverage of the situation.

5.4.5 Invest in digital communication platforms

Organizations need to develop their capacity to use digital communication platforms including their official websites, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), WhatsApp, YouTube, among others. Such digital communication platforms offer a chance for

communication in real time and quick dissemination of information and engagement with stakeholders in emergencies.

5.4.6 Allocate Adequate financial resources for crisis communication

There should be adequate budget provision for carrying out the media relation functions in case of crisis situations. Adequate financial provisions made the press conference, communication material development, media monitoring, public awareness campaign, and other crisis communication functions possible.

5.4.7 Establish dedicated crisis communication teams

Organizations need to form crisis communication teams made up of PR professionals, communications officials, and management representatives. Such teams need to coordinate all the communication efforts during the entire process of crisis management.

5.4.8 Strengthen monitoring and management of misinformation

It is recommended that organizations be in constant lookout for rumors, misinformation, and unconfirmed reports from traditional as well as digital media. The timely debunking of wrong information was critical in retaining the trust of the people.

5.5 Areas for further research

While this research looked into the role of media relations in crisis management in Kabale district, there is need for further research in the following fields:

1. Comparative research on the effectiveness of media relations in crisis management between the public and private organizations in Uganda.
2. The effects of social media on crisis communication and public trust in the local government institutions.
3. The use of digital public relations approaches in managing organizational crises in Uganda.
4. The effects of ethical principles among journalists on crisis reporting and public perception of emergencies.
5. Evaluation of stakeholder management in building organizational resilience in crisis situations.
6. Public relations professionals' contributions to disaster preparedness and emergency communication in Uganda.
7. Comparison of crisis communication approaches among local governments in different districts in Uganda.

REFERENCES

Coombs, W. T. (2021). *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Grunig, J. E. (2006). Furnishing the edifice: Ongoing research on public relations as a strategic management function.

Heath, R. L., & O'Hair, H. D. (Eds.). (2020). *Handbook of risk and crisis communication*. Routledge.

Liu, B. F., Austin, L., & Jin, Y. (2011). How publics respond to crisis communication strategies: The interplay of information form and source.

Men, L. R., & Bowen, S. A. (2022). *Excellence in public relations and effective organizations: A study of communication management*. Routledge.

Seeger, M. W. (2020). Best practices in crisis communication: An expert panel process. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*.

Ulmer, R. R., Sellnow, T. L., & Seeger, M. W. (2022). *Effective crisis communication: Moving from crisis to opportunity* (5th ed.).

Fearn-Banks, K. (2017). *Crisis communications: A casebook approach* (5th ed.). Routledge.

Benoit, W. L. (1997). Image repair discourse and crisis communication. *Public Relations Review*.

Coombs, W. T. (2015). *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Cutlip, S. M., Center, A. H., & Broom, G. M. (2006). *Effective public relations* (9th ed.). Pearson Education.

Fearn-Banks, K. (2017). *Crisis communications: A casebook approach* (5th ed.). Routledge.

Grunig, J. E., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Heath, R. L. (2013). *The SAGE handbook of public relations* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Mitroff, I. I. (2005). *Why some companies emerge stronger and better from a crisis: Seven essential lessons for surviving disaster*. AMACOM.

Reynolds, B., & Seeger, M. W. (2005). Crisis and emergency risk communication as an integrative model.

Seeger, M. W., Sellnow, T. L., & Ulmer, R. R. (2018). *Communication and organizational crisis* (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.

Ulmer, R. R., Sellnow, T. L., & Seeger, M. W. (2019). *Effective crisis communication: Moving from crisis to opportunity* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Wilcox, D. L., Cameron, G. T., & Reber, B. H. (2015). *Public relations: Strategies and tactics* (11th ed.). Pearson Education.