



Crisis Communication Management Model
in the Public Sector of Dubai
نموذج إدارة الاتصال خلال الأزمات في القطاع الحكومي بدبي

By
Budoor Hussain Ali

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Dr. Arun Bajracharya

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APPENDIX C

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Title

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Abstract

Communication is at the heart of our lives. It is our means of conveying information and understanding facts, of enabling us to prepare for a predicted event, deal with that event and to be informed. The unexpected events occur every day, and with the increase of the negative outcomes of these incidents on people and organizations, they would become crises that require effective management. The use of CCM as a success factor for this effective crisis management enables the organization to avert or minimize the undesired impact on the businesses, stakeholders as well as the society.

In a legendary city like Dubai, the fast growing businesses and the infrastructure developments as well as the population increase, any crisis type might be expected. The government organizations generally share common foundations of strategies and processes to achieve the Emirate's vision; hence they need to ensure preserve the positive reputation and image of it. The emerging need for a unified model of CCM for the public sector can achieve preserving the reputation by creating the consistency among the sector during crises. Therefore, this dissertation presents a proposed model that can be implemented in the public sector in Dubai.

The proposal is a result of extensive efforts of research that started with literature review on different topics related to CCM as well as some highlights of benchmarking conducted with the practices in Singapore and Australia governments in the same field. The finding enabled the researcher to collect and analyze the real data based on a conceptual model and research propositions. The final results supported the conceptual model that consists of *pre-crisis*, *during crisis* and *post crisis stages*; in addition to supporting the propositions developed earlier which stressed on three main aspects: the important role of communication in crisis management, the emerging need for a unified CCM model in the public sector and the effective role of stakeholders in CCM. Finally, a set of recommendations are proposed to support successful CCM practices in the governmental organizations, which would eventually support maintaining the positive image and reputation of the organization and the government.

Keywords: *crisis communication management (CCM), stakeholders, CCM teams.*

الملخص

الاتصال هو عصب الحياة، فهو من أهم الوسائل المستخدمة لدى البشر لنقل المعلومات والحقائق، وهو الممكن الرئيس للاستعداد والتعامل مع الأحداث اليومية سواء كانت متوقعة أم لا، وفي حالة حدوث مواقف غير متوقعة على المستوى الشخصي أو المؤسسي فإنها قد تؤدي إلى حدوث نتائج سلبية، وهذه الحالات تتحول إلى أزمات تتطلب إدارتها بشكل فعال لاحتواء الخسائر بأقصى درجة ممكنة. ففي حالة الأزمات على المستوى المؤسسي والحكومي، فإن استخدام نموذج فعال لإدارة الاتصال خلال الأزمات (CCM Model) يعد عامل نجاح لإدارة الأزمات لتجنب أو تقليل أي نتائج أو تأثيرات غير مرغوب بها والتي قد تؤثر سلباً على الصعيد المؤسسي، والعلاقات مع الشركاء وأصحاب العلاقة، بالإضافة إلى المجتمع.

وفي إمارة دبي، التي تعد مدينة أسطورية بما وصلت إليه من نجاحات عالمية في مجالات كثيرة، وفي ظل سرعة النمو الاقتصادي وتطوير البنية التحتية فضلاً عن الزيادة السكانية، فإنه من المتوقع أن تحدث أزمات ذات تأثيرات مختلفة قد تخص مجالات مختلفة، فلذلك فإن الجهات الحكومية والتي تُعنى بتحقيق رؤية الإمارة وتنفيذ استراتيجيتها، عليها أن تضمن الحفاظ على السمعة الإيجابية للمدينة خلال حدوث أي من هذه الأزمات وذلك باستخدام نموذج موحد فعال لإدارة الاتصال خلال الأزمات والذي يضمن التنسيق العملي بين الجهات على المستوى الداخلي والخارجي، والتوحيد في الرسائل الموجهة للجمهور المستهدف، خلال أوقات زمنية محدودة نظراً لطبيعة الحالات.

وعليه، فإن هذه الأطروحة تقدم نموذجاً لإدارة الاتصال خلال الأزمات في القطاع الحكومي بدبي، وهو نتيجة جهود واسعة من البحوث النظرية حول عدة مواضيع تتعلق بإدارة الأزمات، ومن ثم مناقشة دور الاتصال خلال الأزمات، بالإضافة إلى دور الشركاء وأصحاب العلاقة، وخلق العمل، ومن ثم تسليط الضوء على الممارسات المتبعة في سنغافورة وأستراليا. وبعد ذلك تدرجت الأطروحة إلى دراسة للوضع الحالي في القطاع الحكومي عن طريق جمع المعلومات وتحليلها ومن ثم مناقشتها بالمقارنة مع النتائج النظرية السابقة، وبناءً عليه تم تقديم مقترح لنموذج الاتصال خلال الأزمات في القطاع الحكومي بدبي، والذي ينقسم إلى ثلاثة مراحل (تبدأ بمرحلة ما قبل الأزمة، خلال الأزمة، بعد الأزمة)، ومن ثم تم دعم ما توصل إليه البحث من خلال ثلاثة جوانب رئيسية هي: أهمية دور الاتصال خلال الأزمات، الحاجة الملحة لاعتماد نموذج موحد للقطاع الحكومي، والدور الفعال للشركاء وأصحاب العلاقة خلال الأزمات.

وينتهي البحث، بتقديم بعض التوصيات العملية التي من شأنها أن تدعم الممارسات الناجحة لإدارة الاتصال خلال الأزمات في القطاع الحكومي، الأمر الذي سيدعم ضمان الحفاظ على السمعة الإيجابية للحكومة ومؤسساتها.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my Mother, who has been constantly praying for me to succeed in life; and to my Uncle Ahmed who has been always encouraging me to pursue higher educations.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Communication is at the heart of our lives, be it personal or business. It is our means of conveying information and understanding information, of enabling us to prepare for a predicted event, deal with that event and to be informed. Communication can be a matter of fact, or of vital importance. In the case of a crisis, each piece of information and communication can be vital to the successful management of an event.

The unexpected occurs every day, to people and to organizations. The undesired event or action can leave its impact on a person, or an organization or both and such impacts can change the future, as it had been planned. The magnitude of the impact differs depending on forecasting and preparedness of the people.

Considering corporate organizations, these unexpected events can be called crises and they would impact the organizations' employees, customers, business, existence and image. All organizations, be it private or public, develop strategies to serve the purpose of their existence, which is mainly providing a good or service, business growth and continuity. Despite the difference of organizations' nature, they all can be hit by a crisis that demands expert management based on strategic preparedness in order to minimize or avoid significant or terminal impact on the business and stakeholders.

"Crisis situations tend to suggest a dialectic challenge to any governments: risks and opportunities. When a crisis erupts, government's image is at stake and its accountability tested since the government is responsible for life rescue, damage control and rebuilding in the aftermath" (Chen 2009: 189).

In the public sector, which is the scope of this paper, the types of crises differ from one entity to another due to a multitude of reasons that will be explored later. Most government entities have mature models to manage crises effectively, and others have just started creating their own. The use of communication as a success factor for effective crisis management varies from one entity to another. Communication is an essential factor to manage the impact of crises on an organization's business, its

stakeholders as well as the society. In order to guarantee effective communication, an efficient Crisis Communication Management (CCM) model should be adopted.

Currently, every entity at Government of Dubai uses a unique CCM model of its own to serve its purpose. These models might have succeeded in random crises; however, since all public entities share common grounds of operational processes to achieve the common vision of the government, it would be logical to have an effective approach to adopt a unified model to successfully manage the impact of crisis in a modern society like Dubai. Uniformity of approach in a broad based sense would help in minimizing the chances of error and mismanagement; and would maximize the possibility of the desired outcomes. It is important to note, for the purposes of this exercise, that Dubai is an international city, with many nationalities residing in. The diverse population means that some events would generate international media and governmental interests. This fact places even greater importance on the need for excellence in CCM.

CCM in the private sector is thoroughly explored in the literature, as well the public sector especially in financial risk matters. Nevertheless, the CCM current situation in the public sector of Dubai has been never examined. Also, it is important to mention that the end result of deploying successful CCM will eventually result in maintaining the Emirate's image and reputation among its stakeholders.

Research Question

What would be an appropriate Crisis Communication Management model to be implemented across the public sector of Dubai?

Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to recommend a unified model to achieve consistency for crisis communication management that can be implemented in the public sector in Dubai.

This aim will be accomplished by achieving the following objectives of this research:

- Identifying the crises and their criteria affecting the public sector;

- Investigating how communication can be effectively used to manage the impacts and outcomes of a crisis in the public sector;
- Benchmarking with current practices in other countries;
- Examining the public sector preparedness to manage a crisis through effective communication; and
- Establishing a set of recommendations to support successful CCM practices in the government organizations.

Research Scope

The scope of the dissertation will be to study the crisis communication management practice for the public sector, with a focus on some selected governmental entities from the Government of Dubai. The importance of conducting this type of research is to propose a model that can be used as a tool to maintain the Emirate's image and reputation, through effective communication practices.

The structure of the dissertation starts with a literature review discussing organizational crises, providing a highlight on crisis management process, identifying communication's role to manage the impact of public sector crises and exploring the available CCM models, defining the role of stakeholders for CCM, discussing CCM success factors; and benchmarking CCM activities in other countries. After that, the conceptual framework is explained as a result of the previous section. Following that, the methodology for conducting this research is described, which is qualitative and is collected and collated through interviewing two government entities from Government of Dubai. Then, the analysis and discussion chapter is presented to probe practical findings against the theoretical findings of the literature. Finally, it concludes with recommendations for successful implementation of CCM to be adopted by Government of Dubai.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The world of government and business today is facing constant change, much of it driven by faltering economies in home and external constituencies. The global financial crisis is an example of the challenges being faced on a global scale. However, it would be wrong to assume that a financial crisis is about only economics, profit and loss. For government is about services for the people, jobs and inter-governmental relations.

Many organizations are being hit by various crises types that are affecting their continuity and reputation. These crises must be successfully managed, so far as they can be, to minimize their impact. When a crisis hits, mature organizations are likely prepared to manage the crisis with a designed formal set of guidelines and processes that address business and stakeholder needs at every level. It is important to recognize always that stakeholders are internal as well as external (King 2002).

The concept of developing these formal guidelines and procedures, which is called Crisis Management, has been stressed by many scholars. King (2002) had mentioned in his article that almost all researchers in this field had stressed the importance of developing and adopting corporate crisis management for the benefits of the organizations' existence and business continuity, starting with the leading scholar of crisis management Fink in his (1986) book, Fearn-Banks (1996), Pearson and Clair (1998), Coombs (1999), Barton (2001), and many others mentioned in other articles. In practice, it is important to share the process of managing a crisis and its outcomes among the relevant stakeholders, especially the internal employees. This clear communication would be essential for the operational teams to sufficiently move forward to avoid or reduce the negative impacts (Comfort 2007).

Usually, policy-makers perceive crisis as a threat that may damage their reputational image (Hermann and Dayton 2009), which may be managed by effective CCM to reduce any negative impact on the crisis outcomes. CCM has become a significant topic in the literature since the last century due to its effectiveness to manage the impact of post-crises (King 2002 and Hermann and Dayton 2009). For the public sector, efficient CCM is required to be adopted due to the crises impacts on the core

functions of any government including citizens' safety, critical infrastructures and societal values (Boin et al. 2010).

The following section of this literature review section shed some light on crisis management before moving to the core of the research, which is organizational CCM.

Crisis Management

Definition of Crisis and Organizational Crisis

In order to identify what crisis management is, it is worth starting with a definition of crisis. King (2002) had explored many definitions of crisis in his article by the leading crisis scholars. After studying all these definitions as well as others from other researchers, a crisis can be defined as a sudden situation that has hit and might cause threat and disruption to a current system, and would likely result in negative impacts on financial conditions, industry, products and services, public as well as reputation (Pearson and Mitroff 1993, Baldry 1998, King 2002, Coombs 2004, Nielsen and Dufresne 2005, and Veil 2011). Its main features are the uncertainty to happen, urgency to react and managing the threats caused (Rosenthal and Kouzmin 1993, King 2002 and Veil 2011).

There are critical differences between the human related crises and the natural disasters. People generally react negatively towards the first type of crises than the natural ones because they are predictable and may be avoidable if proper systems are being implemented in the organizations (Pearson and Mitroff 1993).

Moving forward to organizational crisis, which is the focus of this paper, it has been found that its characteristics and impacts are analogous to the previously defined "crisis". Organizational crises are more likely to occur as a result of human faults either externally as environmental threats or internally such as organizational weaknesses (Stephens et al. 2005).

Organizational crisis can be defined as an event with low-probability and high-impact that threatens the organization structure, financial condition, employees and customers as well as the reputation (Mitroff et al. 1989, Pearson and Clair 1998 and

Hale et al. 2005). Another definition by Fink (1986) is "a situation that can potentially escalate in intensity, fall under close government or media scrutiny, jeopardize the current positive public image of an organization, or interfere with normal business operations including damaging the bottom line in any way". Nevertheless, Snyder et al. (2006: 372) claimed that the definition of organizational crisis is changing due to changes of the crisis management techniques, and he defined it as: "an extraordinary condition that is disruptive and damaging to the existing operating state of an organization. An organizational crisis, if ignored or mismanaged, will threaten competitiveness and sustainability of the affected entity".

Almost all organizations crises share common characteristics. First, the element of surprise of the event itself and the time when it happened (Stephens et al. 2005). Secondly, the cause or trigger of the event which the stakeholders and public would seek to know and might change the perception towards the organization. These causes may differ in each crisis but they are mainly internally such as management succession, shortage of liquidity and products failures; or externally such as sudden market shifts, changes in regulations and international environmental changes. Then, the threat or the impact on the organization and its stakeholders where in a reputational damage might happen and would affect its financial and survival. Finally, the swift decision making and resolution of the damages (Mitroff et al. 1989, Kaufmann et al. 1994, Coombs and Hollady 1996, Pearson and Clair 1998, Hale et al. 2005, Stephens et al. 2005 and Hermann and Dayton 2009).

Besides the common negative expected outcomes of crises, some researches would consider them as opportunities for the organizations to enhance the current practises and eventually to increase the possibilities of positive outcomes (Nilson and Dufresne 2005; and Veil 2011) in addition to the opportunities to assess the teams' performance (Smith 2000).

Crisis Management

Crisis management is a systematic approach that organizations adopt to avert crises or to manage them successfully when they occur. It is a technique which organizations should develop to guarantee its stakeholders' trust; if a crisis would hit, they would be

confident of the outcomes being well managed by the organization management (Pearson and Clair 1998, King 2002, and Najafbagy 2011). Since the crisis situation is uncertain as it has been defined in the previous section, Snyder et al. (2006) mentioned in the article that such situations require the organization to take swift and informed actions to minimize the negative impacts. At the same time, they argue that these actions should be ethical and consider the stakeholders' needs and requirements.

After defining the crisis management, the following section will provide a highlight of crisis management models or processes that organizations may adopt to avoid crises effects.

Researchers have developed many models and processes for crisis management, especially for the organizational crises. The following process being widely used is from Rosenthal and Kouzmin (1993); however, the explanation of each stage is taken from various models because most models share similar stages (Stephens et al. 2005).

- Prevention and Mitigation

It is important to note that Fink (1986) has divided this stage into three sub-stages which are mitigation, planning and warning. However, many researchers have combined them into one stage. It starts with identifying warning signals for an approaching crisis. These signals may be faced or ignored (Stephens et al. 2005) depending on the organization's management decision. If the management would decide to confront the crisis, then a crisis team should be identified and should be given trainings and exercises so that they can identify the core of the crisis, the threats it poses and to manage its impact (Rosenthal and Kouzmin 1993 and Stephens et al. 2005). This team will be given various roles during all stages (Hale et al. 2005), therefore they need to have certain qualifications and competencies, such as creativity, decision making, power to take responsibility, and problem solving (Kaufmann et al. (1994).

- Preparation and Planning

In this stage, the organization needs to be prepared to face any crisis in order to control the immediate damage, limit the negative effects and to contain the crisis from affecting other organizational factors. Once the situation is diagnosed, then a crisis

management plan should be developed (Stephens et al. 2005 and Coombs 2004). Kaufmann et al. (1994) suggests that the preparation should be completed in the previous stage as a guideline for the organization, once a crisis hits, then it should be customized for the specific situation.

- **Response and Decision Making**

Once an event is deemed to be a crisis and its initial impact has been felt, notwithstanding all preventions and preparations, the organization should utilize all resources and efforts to effectively manage the situation. In this stage, the crisis response team will be responsible for various actions, for example, the communication team will be conveying the status of the crisis events to the management, stakeholders, public and media (Hale et al. 2005). At the same time, other teams will be given other tasks such as administrations and on-field operations (Kaufmann et al. 1994). Decision making needs to be made by senior management in order to apply all the preparation components (Veil 2011).

- **Recovery and Change**

This stage involves the recovery of the crisis in which the situation is contained and the damages are resolved. It involves the learning of all situation factors for the internal stakeholders to handle the situational crisis for the external stakeholders. One of the main aims of this stage is to manage the public perception towards the organizations in order to maintain its reputation and business (Hale et al. 2005). Besides, the crisis teams should always be alert of any risks to continue affecting the stakeholders because of the recovered crisis, as well as monitoring others' crises to avoid their effect on the organization and to learn from them (Kaufmann et al. 1994).

For each crisis, there would be a degree of success where the crisis impact is effectively managed, or a degree of failure by individuals or groups (Pearson and Clair 1998), hence a revision is required to evaluate what went right and what went wrong (Veil 2011). Another finding is what Veil (2011) has focused on, which is the learning factor of any crisis hits an organization. He found that most models do not cover or they do not include a second layer process for an ongoing learning to avoid future crises when a threatening signal occurs.

For more details of different crisis management models, the reader may refer to the articles written by Mitroff et al. 1989, Pearson and Clair 1998, Hodges 2000 and Comfort 2007).

As for the public sector crisis management, Smith and McCloskey (1998: 41) said in their article:

"Concerns exist within the public sector about the ability of organizations to communicate issues of risk. These concerns include: the nature and magnitude of risks; the vulnerability of those who may bear the consequences associated with an event; and the sense of helplessness felt by victim groups".

The public sector scope and diversity plays a dynamic role being a regulatory interface of the organizations generating crises and the public who are being affected from these crises (Smith and McCloskey 1998). Hence, any public organization crisis affects the overall image and reputation of the whole government. During crises, the public generally expect that the government response will minimize the negative effects and contain the crisis at the earliest. This expectation is a result of the public's trust that the government is well prepared in advance to avoid or avert crises (Efficiency Unit of Hong Kong 2009).

Criteria to Identify Crises in the Public Sector

All organizations should be fully aware of the crises that may hit different industries because some disasters may affect various industries whether public or private (Mitroff et al. 1989). The nature of the public sector and its businesses is distinguished from the private sector due to the sizes, budgets, and stakeholders. Therefore, the crises types in the public sector vary from the private organizations (Lee 2009).

When a crisis hits any organization within the public sector, the level of accountability and complexity of the government communication exceeds the level of any crisis that would hit the private sector, in addition to the thorough media and public analysis and studies to explore the causes and consequences (Helm et al. 1981).

There are many crises types that affect the public sector and require effective CCM models to manage outcomes. Many researchers have categorized the public sector crises as internal and external like Mitroff et al. (1989) and Snyder et al. (2006). Another way of categorizing them is what Coombs (2004) described in his article as clusters including victim crisis, accidental and intentional crisis. However, the common types are listed here (not limited to) according to Rosenthal and Kouzmin (1993), Baldry (1998) and Najafbagy (2011) findings:

- Natural disasters such as earthquakes, storms and floods;
- Ethnic tensions and demographics imbalance;
- Terrorism, transitional crimes and labor strikes;
- Institutional changes that caused dramatic changes that affect the internal stakeholders as well as the externals;
- Policy fiascos that caused changes affecting various sectors such as social and economical matters;
- Economic recessions and financial risks caused as a result of changing the capital investments or funding provisions; and
- Human errors that may cause some technological failures in public sector software; or mistakes in constructions specifications that would cause buildings collapse; or medical errors that would cause deaths.

Lee (2009) identified in his research eight factors that categorize the nature of the crises in the public sector, which are the post crises outcomes that need to be managed:

- Crisis that raise questions and doubts from the stakeholders for the ineffectiveness of governmental entities to prevent or contain a crisis;
- Crisis that blow up a current problem of an entity's failure of communication;
- Crisis that increase media scrutiny;
- Crisis that can be accumulated in the public's memories to add negative perception for the governmental entities capabilities to contain a future crisis;
- Crisis that are perceived by the public for its broad context, rather than looking at it for a specific temporarily episode;

- Crisis that are interpreted by the public as a reflection of the government's prioritization of the public's services and products;
- Crisis usually leads the public to look at the bureaucratic nature of the government to manage the crisis and its outcomes; and
- Crisis context being political or economical or social create an external crisis environment that may influence the government decisions.

The Efficiency Unit at the Government of Hong Kong (2009) had determined three levels of crises, in order to know and put plans for managing them. These levels are:

- Level 1: internal crises within the organization internal departments; and the impacts are contained internally with minimal effect to external parties.
- Level 2: major incident that involves more than one organization and/or has its impact has affected external stakeholders and/or a large size of the community.
- Level 3: the crisis that has regional effects and large size of the community. This level requires large number of resources to resolve the situation and its impact.

As consequences of the crises categorization, the success of the government communication relies on the ability to embark upon these factors. In addition, the common communication strategies used for crisis response may not be adequate to describe the crisis complexity and address the government efforts to contain it (Lee 2009).

Crisis Communication Management (CCM)

Definition of Organizational Communication and Crisis Communication

It is important to explain some definitions before discussing the concept of CCM. Starting with organizational communication, which consists of sending and receiving messages through different means, it is defined by Greenbaum (1974) as:

"A system of purpose, operational procedures and structure. The purpose of organizational communication is to facilitate the achievement of organizational goals. The operational procedures involve the utilization of functional communication networks related to organizational goals; the adoption of communication policies appropriate to communication network objectives; and the implementation of such policies through suitable communication activities. The structural elements include: the organization unit, functional communication networks, communication policies and communication activities".

Organizational communication is well-known by either written media such as news releases and publications; or hardware activities for instance telecommunication, and TVs, or speech activities such as interviews, meetings and conferences (Greenbaum 1974).

Communication is a significant factor that can influence and present how well the organization performs (Harshman and Harshman 1999). It is important to achieve the communication objective to know the nature of the stakeholder, therefore designing the messages and using the appropriate tools to reach them, which will guarantee the communication effectiveness (Te'eni 2001 and Hunt 2011).

The second definition to be explained is crisis communication, which is a function within the overall crisis management model (Reynolds and Seeger 2005). It has been discussed by many scholars as crisis or risk communication; it is defined as an interactive information exchange among different stakeholders during a crisis that describes the nature of the crisis, its causes, effects, magnitude and control efforts that are being taken by the organization (King 2002, Reynolds and Seeger 2005 and Palenchar and Heath 2006). It involves the same process of communication, which is

sending and receiving of the messages between the organization and its stakeholders through verbal, visual, or written tools during the crisis management process (Reynolds and Seeger 2005).

In crisis communication, it is crucial to effectively communicate the appropriate information using the right tools in the suitable times with the stakeholders (King 2002 and Reynolds and Seeger 2005). The stakeholders are the main players where the organization needs to keep a positive relation and dialogue with them, and the organization should increase the positive perception of control to contain the crisis outcomes (King 2002 and Reynolds and Seeger 2005). Moreover, crisis communication provides insightful input to find mutual understanding between the organization situation from the crisis and the stakeholders' concerns and expectations; which will eliminate any resistance and manage the crisis impacts effectively (Reynolds and Seeger 2005 and Palenchar and Heath 2006). More argument about the stakeholders' role in CCM will be discussed later.

The Role of Communication in Managing the Impacts and Outcomes of a Crisis

Many scholars in the field of crisis management have recognized the essential role of communication to manage the crisis impact on organizations (Kaufmann et al. 1994, Hale et al. 2005, Reynolds and Seeger 2005, Chen 2009 and Garvey and Buckley 2010). The purpose of adopting communication in managing crises, as mentioned previously, is to reduce the negative impacts. Nevertheless, Kaufmann et al. (1994) and Reynolds and Seeger (2005) have added more to that purpose in their articles by explaining how communication can initiate recovery strategies and plans, manage the organization image and perception, repair legitimacy, justify actions of the organization, identify the communication strategy whether apology, learning or change. In addition, communication has a pivotal role for reporting the progress of the situation as well as the actions taken by the crisis team (King 2002).

Crisis communication "seeks to explain the specific event, identify likely consequences and outcomes, and provide specific harm-reducing information to affected communities in an honest, candid, prompt, accurate, and complete manner"

said Reynolds and Seeger (2005: 46). Besides, it contributes to achieve the organizational goals and to resolve conflicts (Garvey and Buckley 2010).

In addition, lack of communication during a crisis would attract people to fill this gap of information with rumors and innuendo, which will affect the organization image and reputation and very importantly, staff morale (Horsley and Barker 2002; and Hunt 2011). Prompt and accurate messages delivered by the organization would help ensure the control of the situation, avoid any undesired risks to occur and would increase stakeholders' loyalty and respect to the organization (Snyder et al. 2006, Hunt 2011; and Hale et al. 2005). Moreover, communicating the organization's preparedness for crisis management establishes a strong foundation for positive relations with the media who are considered one of the influential stakeholders, especially sometimes during a crisis the access to the some targeted media might be difficult (Horsley and Barker 2002).

In short, it can be said that communication is the catalyst for creating shared messages within the organization and between its stakeholders; and a prerequisite for most crisis management models (Nilsson 2010). Knowing the role of communication in managing the impacts and outcomes of a crisis is important, however knowing the most effective model to use during a crisis is an essential success factor for productive crisis communication management (Kaufmann et al. 1994). Despite Pearson and Mitroff (1993) article which described crisis management in depth, with a minor highlight of the communication role in the strategic checklist, the importance of communication in managing crises is essential as it has been clearly mentioned by other scholars. The article limited the role of communication to media training for crisis management and enhancing the communication with the community as well as the stakeholders.

Jin et al. (2006) stressed in their article that during crises in the public sector, the critical role of communication increases massively. That is because the public wants to hear from the government and know what are the efforts are being taking place and how the public can participate to overcome the situation (Smith and McCloskey 1998).

Effective CCM

Moving forward to the core subject of this paper, this section is going to provide thorough literature review for some CCM models. After investigating these models, a new model will be recommended to be further examined to become an appropriate CCM model to be implemented in the public sector in Dubai.

It was mentioned previously that crises cause pressure on the management to take decisions within limited time in an attempt to rectify a situation and to communicate the required information to the stakeholders. Hence, the organizations especially in the public sector should be ready with defined strategies, and to have a set of formal processes and procedures to manage the crisis outcomes efficiently in order to avoid or minimize the negative effects (Horsley and Barker 2002, King 2002 and Chen 2009).

It is important for the public sector to adopt proactive strategies with detailed understanding of any risk that would hit the sector, therefore, develop appropriate model to be implemented immediately once a crisis hits (Chen 2009).

CCM Models

Many scholars have recognized the importance of CCM in the public sector since the middle of twentieth century (Dong et al. 2011). Initially, most of the theories developed in this field focused on the information flow of crises and the channels used. Hale et al. (2005) found in her research that the scholars stressed on the information flow using certain channels to reach the target audience, which in turn has created information overload with limited channels used. According to Hale et al. (2005) this theory caused failures in managing the crisis outcomes and delays in conveying the relevant information to the stakeholders. Another theoretical model is what Pearson and Clair (1998) developed that forecasts the success or failure of the crisis outcome from the crisis management process being adopted. Horsley and Barker (2002) have added to this theory that the quicker and timely information flow is, the more successful CCM is guaranteed.

Linear CCM Model



Figure 1: Linear CCM Model developed by Hale et. al (2005)

This model developed by Hale et al. (2005) starts with a triggering event, which is the crisis itself. Once the crisis is admitted by the management of the organization, the Observation stage is followed. During this stage, the CCM should gather all data that caused the crisis, organize them, assess any missing information, and then to make all information accessible for the whole crisis management team for further analysis. Accuracy and speed is essential in this stage due to the time pressure and high risk associated with the crisis.

After that, the Interpretation stage comes in which it involves analyzing the collected data and assessing its relevance to the current situation of the crisis. Any new information gathered after the previous step should be integrated within the information in this stage in order to develop accurate situational understanding. The more information is gathered the more complex the situation understanding would be, hence the communication team needs to filter the relevant information from the others to help them in the next stage.

In the Choice stage, the crisis management team would receive an accurate situational analysis with several action alternatives to achieve the CCM goal, which is to avoid or lessen the negative outcomes of the crisis. Given the crisis factors (time pressure, limited resources, stress and ambiguity); the crisis management teams needs to take timely and accurate choice to support the CCM goal.

The last stage of this model is Dissemination. Once the choice is set by the decision makers, the actions selected should be circulated among the involved parties to execute the operational directives, firstly to manage the crisis itself, and secondly to communicate the situation with the stakeholders.

This model looks similar to the previously discussed crisis management models in the process. It clearly presents the importance of communication to manage crises.

However, it assumes that the events can wait for the preceding ones, and then decisions would be made, which might not be possible during the time pressure of crises.

Spiral CCM Model

Hale et al. (2005) has examined the above CCM model for the research, and has found that in some cases the linear model is incomplete. The same stages tend to re-occur during the communication activities due to the information flow to observe the crisis data, interpret them, choose relevant actions and disseminate the information. Therefore, a new model was developed to consider these facts as a spiral model.

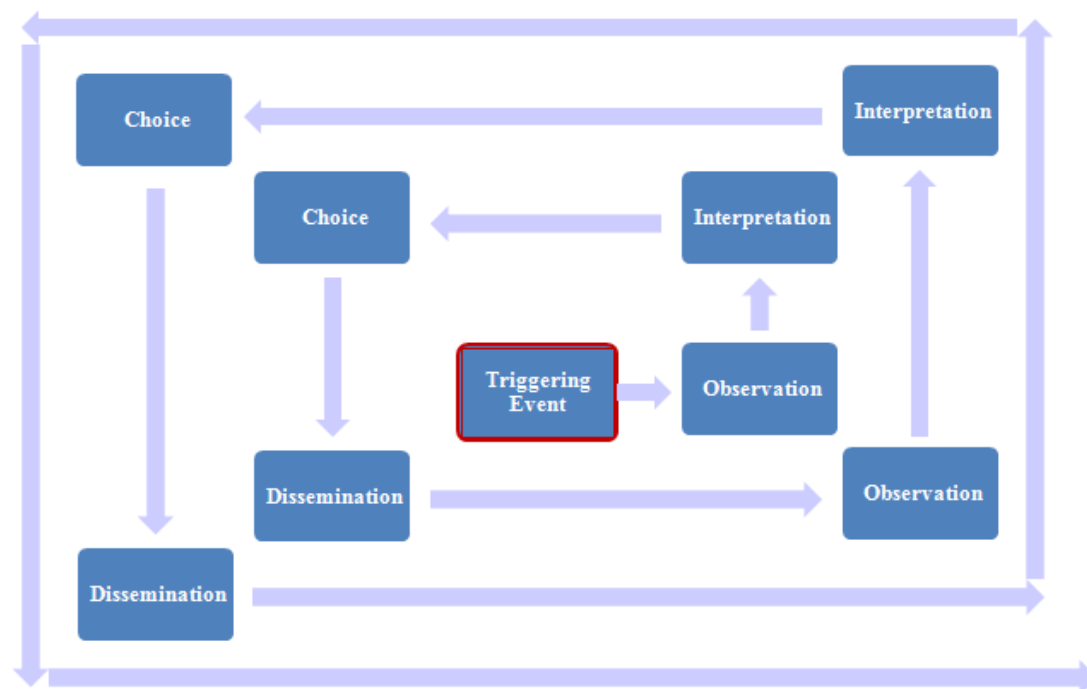


Figure 2: Spiral CCM Model developed by Hale et. al (2005)

The number of re-occurring stages differs from one crisis to another, depending on the nature and the risks associated with it. It was found that usually, the process moves forward from observation to dissemination, which triggers another event and continues with the loop. However, in some cases it was found that the teams had to move backwards at some stages to verify and re-identify the accurate data and then move on.

As mentioned, the spiral CCM model starts with a triggering event that puts the organization into a crisis mode. The crisis communication team adopts the following steps in order to achieve their goal to avert or manage the crisis outcomes.

The next stage is the Spiral Observation. In this stage the data collection continues to identify the crisis causes, actions required for or by the crisis management teams and others. The flow of information, its resources and analysis change during the crisis, therefore, the stage would be repeated several times. Most often, the first round of observation is to determine the crisis, where the repeated ones are to develop thorough situational understanding to help the following stages.

After that, comes the Spiral Interpretation stage. Every new data collected in the spiral observation stage, is going to be added to the previous knowledge of the situation, assessed and analyzed in this stage to gain valuable information to facilitate developing the actions required to resolve the crisis and its outcomes.

Moving forward, Spiral Choice is followed. Once the options are created from the previous stage, the decision makers will have alternative actions to be implemented after conducting judgmental evaluations of the outcome effects on the stakeholders. Each choice is made will go through the spiral process and would be repeated if other actions would be required to rectify the crisis outcomes. Hale et al. (2005) stressed in the article that these choices are useful for corrective adjustments when necessary.

Finally, yet repeatedly, the Spiral Dissemination stage, which is to perform the actions determined from the spiral choice stage by the crisis management team, as well as exchange information with the stakeholders. Every dissemination effect will have ongoing observation and following process in order to achieve the goal of mitigating any direct damage to the organization.

According to Hale et al. (2005), this model provides accurate insight of the communication activities during the crisis and its rapid environmental changes. Nevertheless, she stressed that the challenge of adopting this type of model lies on the overlap of the process stages given the crisis situation factors (time, stress, recourses

and ambiguity) which would require several stages to work in parallel to meet the CCM team goal.

Considering the overlapped processes at different stages of the proposed spiral model, it might be actionable for small crises; however, in the case of major crises affecting a large number of stakeholders with losses, it might not be effective for swift actions and responses.

CERC Model



Figure 3: A Working Model of CERC adapted from Reynolds and Seeger (2005) Model

Another model was developed by Reynolds and Seeger (2005) for Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication called CERC. In the article, the authors started with a clear differentiation between risk communication and crisis communication. Then, they developed a model to combine both of them. This model anticipates that no matter the crisis type or risk are, the crisis communication team should follow this process to avert the crisis outcomes affecting the organization reputation and its stakeholders.

The five-stage model suggests that the communication team should be ready to manage the crisis outcomes before any crisis hits. It begins with a Pre-Crisis stage wherein the education and awareness are essential. The education is targeted to the internal stakeholders as well as the public. This type of participatory effort is required for the stakeholders to jointly monitor with the crisis management teams any risk signals, to increase awareness of any risk might affect their interests, facilitate alliances with relevant agencies and groups, develop and test communication messages for simulations to ensure the public preparedness.

Secondly, the Triggering Event stage starts by a crisis signals that has hit the organization and would affect the organization and its stakeholders. After making the

stakeholders prepared for the most likely impacts and risks, the communication in this stage with the stakeholders is to establish an emotional foundation to retain and gain the public empathy and trust. Also, to create a general situational understanding of the crisis and its consequences, as well as identifying all accurate crisis related information and reduce the uncertain ones. Further, to assign a spokesperson for the information exchange as well as the channels and methods to be used.

The following stage is Maintenance, which focuses on communication with the public and affected stakeholders. The rational of this communication is to ensure better understanding of the situation and its background and issues. Also, this stage notifies the stakeholders on the source of information to be considered, which in turn will correct any misunderstanding or rumors spread that would cause more risks.

The fourth stage is Resolution in which the public and stakeholders continue to receive information from the organization on the updates of resolutions taken in place, and how these efforts beneficial for remediation and rebuilding of the crisis negative outcomes. Moreover, this resolution communication would facilitate broad-based discussions regarding the causes of the current crisis and the risks associated with it. It would also promote the accountabilities and capabilities of the organization (or other relevant organizations) to reinforce positive corporate reputation and image.

The final stage is Evaluation of the situations and the actions taken. This stage targets the crisis management team and the concerned organizations that played a role in averting the crisis. Besides, all lessons learnt should be documented and formalized in order to improve the current processes effectiveness and teams' capabilities.

This CERC model acknowledges the public and stakeholders on-going participation, which can be considered as an added value to increase the public loyalty towards the organization. Nonetheless, according to Reynolds and Seeger (2005), although this systematic model engages the stakeholders and reduces the uncertainties to the best efforts, it might not always be implemented due to unexpected interactions and risks for the crises that take long time to recover.

Synthesis Model of Crisis Communication for the Public Sector

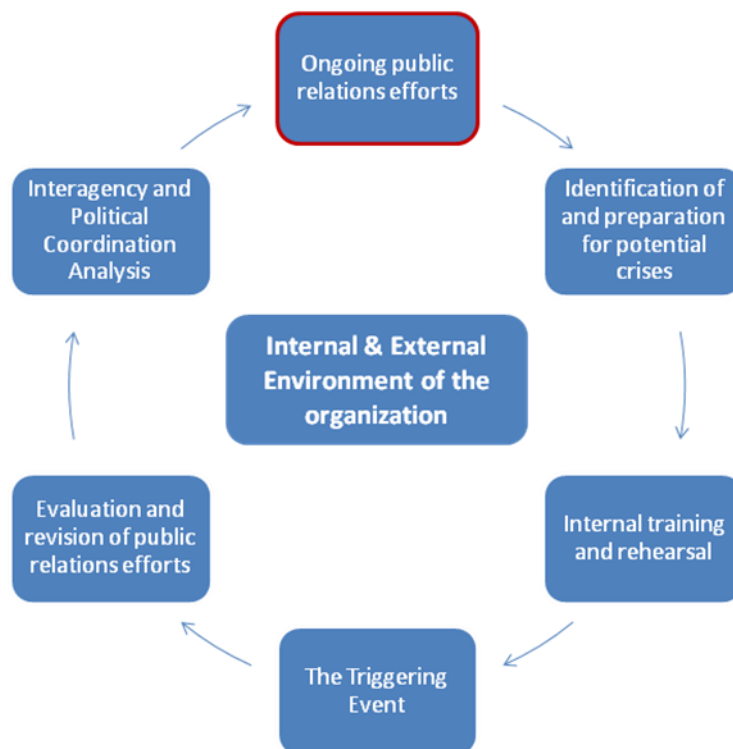


Figure 4: Synthesis Model of Crisis Communication adapted from Horsley and Barker (2002) Model

This model was developed by Horsley and Barker (2002) after studying several models in the private sector, and examined it in the public sector. The Synthesis model revolves around recognizing the internal and external environment of the crisis. It includes six interconnected stages, wherein the environment preparation is important. Firstly, Ongoing Public Relations Efforts stage which endorses the effectiveness of communication by continuous reputation and image building to the public and media during the positive and regular circumstance. This approach would increase the organization credibility and accountabilities during crises.

The second stage is Identification and Preparations for Potential crises. This stage requires the communication and crisis management teams to anticipate potential crises and develop plans to manage them. It is expected that not all crises can be thought of, however, putting initial plans would definitely be added value during unforeseen situations.

The next stage in this interconnected model is the Internal Training and Rehearsal. Written set of communication plans and processes are necessary at this stage, along with on-field trainings and simulations to ensure the effectiveness of the plans as well as the distributions of roles and responsibilities among the crisis management teams and the CCM team.

The above three stages are the preparations in the case of a triggering event happens, and then to be identified as a crisis. Once the crisis is acknowledged, the CCM team is responsible to develop communication strategies and plans to manage the outcomes of this crisis. The team should comprehend that resolving the crisis is an ethical and humane responsibility.

After that comes the Evaluation and Revision of Public Relations Efforts stage. When the crisis is resolved, all previous public relations efforts should be evaluated because it would be an opportunity for the management to revise the plans after observing a real crisis situation. All relevant management parties need to appreciate that the evaluation and revision is to prevent any crisis happening in the future, or to be well prepared if it occurs. It is important for the communication with the stakeholders, especially media, to continue after the crisis to grant the CCM team goal achievement.

The last stage is significant for crisis communication for the public sector, which is Interagency and Political Coordination Analysis. Horsley and Barker (2002) discussed in their article adding this stage in the synthesis model was because of the nature of public sector organizations for not having enough resources to handle comprehensive public relations activities for crises only. This stage suggests that various organizations within the public sector should combine and integrate their efforts for CCM, especially the ones with similar potential crises. Furthermore, political analysis is essential to be considered across the public sector organizations, because some priorities change annually due to climate changes, budgets, management effects and other factors.

The synthesis model encourages pre-crisis preparations through public relations efforts for the public sector that would build a valid foundation for the media in the case of crisis. It provides a general framework for CCM that needs further

examinations to add more stages or details on how to effectively adopt CCM to handle crises in the public sector.

CCM Messages Strategies

The earlier sections have emphasized on the role of CCM to manage the crises outcomes and preserve stakeholders' perceptions towards the organization or the public sector as a whole. The CCM models discussed previously presented the overall frameworks on how to handle a communication crisis and established the need to set strategies and messages for CCM. Setting these strategies is essential to support the aim of this research to find a unified CCM model for the public sector with identified messages strategies.

Since the evolution of CCM field increased in the last decade of previous century, researchers have stressed on the importance of setting messages strategies as part of the CCM preparations and implementation. For example, Coombs has discussed this concept in several articles (Coombs 1995, Coombs and Hollady 1996 and Coombs 2004) as well as other researchers. The CCM should address the communication messages toward the organization and how people should perceive its capabilities to overcome the situation (Coombs 2004).

CCM Message Strategy Type #1

Starting with Coombs (1995), he has come up with five categories of messages strategies that can be used for CCM, which are:

- Nonexistence strategy: it attempts eliminating the crisis by several ways, such as:
 - denying it and communicating a statement that the crisis doesn't exist;
 - clarifying that crisis does not exist with reasons provided;
 - attacking those who reported the nonexistent crisis; and
 - intimidating others using the organizational power.
- Distance strategy: it attempts to eliminate any link between the organization and be multi-faceted and includes:
 - pleading that the organization did not have the intention or decision that provoked the crisis;

- denying the volition by blaming others who the organization claims caused the crisis; and
 - justifying the situation and persuading the stakeholders that no serious risks occurred, or if that was claimed it was a misrepresentation.
- Ingratiation strategy: it attempts in finding ways to achieve public acceptance and approval by:
 - bolstering the organization's reputation and image;
 - transcending the crisis into positive position; and
 - praising others to gain their acceptance.
- Mortification strategy: it attempts winning public's forgiveness and acceptance, by:
 - remediating the stakeholders by offering compensations on any connected losses;
 - repenting and asking for forgiveness; and
 - rectifying the situation with showing plans to prevent future crises.
- Suffering strategy: it attempts to present the organization as a victim to gain public's sympathy

According to Stephens et al. (2005), Coombs (1995) message strategy model helps the organization to modify its stakeholders' perception and identify the crisis causes. These message strategies are direct and need to be further explained especially for complex crises.

CCM Message Strategy Type #2

Coombs and Holladay (1996) had developed another approach to set message strategies for crisis communication. They have stressed the fact that the situation determines the strategy selection to manage the crisis. They have developed The Symbolic Approach, which was based on two theories, Neoinstitutionalism and Attribution. The foremost theory emphasizes on the organization's legitimacy where in the stakeholders believe in the organization's capabilities. When a crisis hits this organization, the challenge is to prevent the organization's legitimacy and the stakeholders' trust, by using effective strategic communication to respond to the legitimacy threats. The latter theory attempts to the attributes created by the public

towards the crisis. The anger and negative attributions of the public would lead to destroying the organization's reputation and image, hence wise CCM strategy should be used to prevent or reduce reputational damage.

The Symbolic Approach stresses the selection of communication strategies to preserve the organization's reputation and image. The suggested strategies of this approach are:

- Convincing stakeholders that crisis does not exist. When there is no crisis that would affect the organization's legitimacy or attribution of responsibility, then this strategy can be selected as a CCM respond. It requires the communication team to deny the existence of the crisis with providing evidence to build the case of the whole situation;
- Reducing the effect of crisis in the perception of stakeholders. If the crisis has been interpreted negatively, then the CCM strategy to be selected should present the minimal damage caused, along with creating a distance between the crisis responsibility and the organization; and
- Increasing the positive perception of the stakeholders toward the organization. When the crisis is acknowledged, the CCM strategy should address the positive history of the organization, and show the current efforts of remedial actions to compensate the losses and create new plans to prevent the same crisis from happening in the future.

This type of CCM strategy is similar to the previously discussed strategy but it mainly focuses on maintaining the organizational image throughout the different ways presented by the authors.

CCM Message Strategy Type #3

Kaufmann et al. (1994) discussed in their article the myth for disclosing information of the crisis situation. The argument was "what you don't say can hurt you".

Therefore, the approach suggests that in the crisis situation, the crisis communication team should disclose all information related to the crisis and its effects to the stakeholders; in accurate, complete and quick manners, without any delay or withheld of any fact. On-going communication is encouraged to ensure the delivery of all necessary information of the risks caused.

This type of strategy, requires the communication team to answer five questions developed by the author, and then to determine the disclosure of information or not. These questions are direct and simple, yet recognizing the value of the answers is essential for the decision making:

- Would information be fatal or would cause surplus risks?

For this question, the senior management should identify the risks associated with the crises, and if these risks would lead to further negative outcomes. If that's the case, the organization should follow the disclosure of information approach and acknowledge full responsibility to overcome the situation, especially is the crisis is risking public's health and safety.

- Is the organization the victim or the cause of the crisis?

If the crisis is caused by external environmental factors which are uncontrollable by the organization, the CCM should recognize this situation and assess it differently from the case where the organization caused the crisis due to internal faults. Accordingly, the information disclose or non-disclose should be determined after evaluating the consequences.

- Are the surrounding information worse that the situation facts?

Rumors can be spread quicker than the facts and would cause more harm to the situation if not dealt quickly by revealing the true story. Accurate and immediate information disclosure would save the organization's reputation against the exaggerations spread within the stakeholders' environment.

- Is the organization ready to afford to respond to the crisis?

It is important for the organization to recognize the consequences of disclosing information, and to understand its ability to bear the cost of taking corrective actions. In the case of moving forward with this approach, the spokesperson or the officials should address the resulting problems as well as the time when the team would be ready to resolve the situation.

- Can the organization afford not to respond?

This question has a direct link to the argument of the authors' argument in the article, "what you don't say can hurt you". It is essential for the management to understand that not-responding all the information or some of them would lead to more risks that can affect the organization's reputation, especially if the organization offers various services and the stakeholders would question the credibility of the other services and products.

According to Kaufmann et al. (1994), this approach is useful for the long term recovery plans, where the current crisis causes various risks affecting the organization's long term existence. On the other hand, the weakness of this approach is that it is difficult to persuade the public of the organization's capability in managing previous crises. Also, revealing all information that the public not aware of might horrify them and cause surplus risks. Moreover, the authors stressed on the importance of adding more questions that are tailor made to the business nature and environment of the organization. It is important also to develop a policy for handling public communications in various scenarios the CCM team can think of before any crisis hits.

Although Kaufmann et al. (1994) discussed the crisis management model as well as the messages strategy in the same article as integrated actions required to prepare for crises, the CCM message strategy of information disclosure looks broad and does not discuss the messages strategy in the case of disclosing information. As the authors suggested, it needs to be further specified while developing the CCM policies for various crises types.

After exploring several types for CCM messages strategies, it is important to consider the factors that influence the selection of the appropriate strategy. It has been agreed as discussed previously that the main objective of CCM is to maintain the organization's reputation and image. This objective can be achieved by several approaches such as involving the stakeholders to participate in the CCM action plans (Stephens et al. 2005), or reminding the public of the organization's vision, mission and values as well as positive history in managing past crises (Coombs and Hollady

1996, Coombs 2004 and Stephens et al. 2005) beside other methods discussed earlier. The factors that should be considered to be accomplished are: stakeholders' categories, organization's past history and credibility, crisis types and its damage severity, available evidence, public's culture that influence the CCM strategy acceptance (Coombs 1999, Ray 1999, Coombs 2004 and Stephens et al. 2005).

Role of Stakeholders in CCM

Definition of Stakeholders

The term stakeholders is defined as a group, individual or organization that can have an effect on the organization's performance, operations or attainments of its objectives. This effect governs the management behaviors in its operations and considers the stakeholders interests in order to respond to create a mutual interest for all parties. The relationship type between the organization and the stakeholders identify the strategic methods to be implemented for any communication (Stephens et al. 2005 and Ulmer 2001). The stakeholders theory in literature stresses on the importance of building critical relationship between the organization and the stakeholders, which will lead to mutual benefits for both parties during the ordinary days as well as any crisis situation (Ulmer 2001).

Role of Stakeholders

It is important to effectively manage the stakeholders' expectations because they play a pivotal role in fulfilling the CCM process. They usually hold the organization the responsibility to control the crisis and in some cases they distance themselves from the crisis and strive to protect their interest (Coombs 2004 and Stephens et al. 2005) unlike the normal situations where the organization is confident of the positive assumptions of their stakeholders' loyalty (Stephens et al. 2005).

Furthermore, it is beneficial for the organization to invest in building critical relationship with its stakeholders prior any crisis event. It is because the stakeholders groups have vested interests for the organization success, which will lead to potential support if the organization faces difficult times. Otherwise, the negatively affected stakeholders will not provide any support to the organization in the absence of strong

relationship which in turn will increase the pressure on the management and the crisis management teams (Ulmer 2001 and Chen 2009).

When a crisis hits an organization, the first thing the management should consider the impact of this crisis on its stakeholders. The categories of these stakeholders differ from an organization to another within the public and private sectors. The more complex the stakeholder environment is, the more responsibilities are accounted for the organization to manage the crisis impacts on each category internally and externally (Stephens et al. 2005 and Ulmer 2001).

Identifying the Stakeholders

Identifying the stakeholders of the organization is important, conversely, identifying the specific stakeholders that are being affected by the crisis is crucial to know how to communicate with them (Stephens et al. 2005). Besides, the stakeholders that can assist in managing the crisis effectively should be considered at the development stage of CCM.

Organization management may classify the stakeholders during the ordinary days depending on the benefits and interests they both need from each other, so it would be expected to prioritize one group as a primary stakeholders and then it would become a secondary in other days (Stephens et al. 2005). However, during crises it is essential to identify the stakeholders who would more likely effectively support the organization to manage the crisis outcomes. The classification of these stakeholders may consider the following criteria defined by Baldry (1998):

- Degree of influence that emphasizes the power influence rather than the project or organization relevance
- Degree of personal interest and objectives gained from the project and how it would inspire the total project success
- Degree of stakeholders inconsistent participation with the organization specific projects

As for the stakeholders' categories that should be considered to address during CCM, several scholars have developed categories to identify the organization's stakeholders.

For example, Ulmer (2001) found from the case studies presented in his article that stakeholders can be categorized as the following; however, the groups included in each category may differ from a situation to another:

- Primary stakeholders: such as employees with their families, vendors and customers; and
- Secondary stakeholders: such as customers and media.

In addition, Stephens et al. (2005) listed in his article four categories for stakeholders, and these are:

- Enabling publics: this category includes all parties that provide authority for the organization and control its resources to enable the organization to exist; for example: regulatory departments, board of directors and shareholders;
- Functional publics: this category includes the groups that enable the organization to operate by giving an input (work or fees) and taking outputs (salaries or services) in return; for example: employees, suppliers and customers. During a crisis, another group might join this category; the victims. They might be customers prior to the crisis, but once they are negatively affected they are considered as victims;
- Normative publics: this category includes groups who share similar values and/or problems; for instance: trade unions and professional societies; and
- Diffused publics: this category includes the groups who emerge as a result of crisis with serious external implications; such as media, public and environmentalists.

This type of categorization includes both internal and external stakeholders, which can be done for all organization types, and then it would be effectively used for CCM messages and strategy design.

The input received from the stakeholders emphasizes on the human factor rather than technical ones, hence the emotional and critical relationship is essential to increase the possibility of stakeholder support during crises (Baldry 1998). In addition, as said by Ulmer (2001), "although establishing strong stakeholder relationships will not likely help an organization avert every crisis, it can play an important role in how the organization resolves a crisis it cannot avoid".

CCM Success Factors

CCM Team

For the successful management of a crisis it is crucial to select the appropriate team members to handle the situation effectively, taking into account the framework of pressure of time and limited information. Organizations' preparedness for crisis management starts with appointing team members who have similar training and understanding of the organization's potential crises and procedures (Horesley and Barker 2002, King 2002 and Smith 2000). One of the members of crisis management team should represent communication (or PR specifically as mentioned in most articles), who is in turn would set another team for CCM (Barton 1993 and King 2002).

Organizations should value and recognize the importance of teams in dealing with crises demands (Smith 2000). The CCM team members are the ones who are going to manage the organization reputation, thus, selecting these members should have criteria to ensure the selection of the right people to work under stress with limited resources. The skills required for the members are mainly similar to the crisis management team including: communication skills to allow effective information gathering and exchange among the members and stakeholders, high levels of commitment, trust and involvement to be able to work in complex situations, decision making skills to identify the risks and recommend resolutions and teamwork skills to work with different people from various backgrounds (Smith 2000, King 2002 and Hunt 2011). Moreover, they need to have some management capabilities such as power and authority for decision making (Kaufmann et al. 1994).

The roles and responsibilities of CCM team should be identified as part of the crisis management procedures. These roles should cover the maximum expected roles to be considered for potential crises, but the responsibilities may change from a situation to another (Hunt 2011), and the number of the members may differ depending on the crisis needs (Smith 2000). Some of the roles are:

- Designing the CCM team, throughout the crisis stages, and assigning the responsibilities of each member;
- Identifying the spokespersons for various statements;

- Handling media inquiries by developing the messages and appointing a personnel for it;
- Handling public inquiries and setting a mechanism for it such as setting a hotline or using social media; and
- Assisting the optimum decision maker to identify the level of information disclosure to preserve the organization's image.

(Kaufmann et al. 1994 and Hunt 2011).

Spokesperson

Another successful factor discussed by many scholars is the identification of crisis spokesperson, to become the source of information to ensure consistency in delivering the messages to the stakeholders' categories. The consistency in messages can increase the organization's credibility and legitimacy, and stakeholders' acceptance (Coombs 1999, Horsley and Barker 2002, Stephens et al. 2005 and Hunt 2011).

He/she should address the messages developed from the approved communication strategy and should be represent the organization's efforts to manage the crisis positively.

Since the spokesperson is perceived by the public to be the source of information; he/she is expected to have a high satisfactory level of judgment and trust by the public (Palenchar and Heath 2006). He/she also needs to be comfortable with the media and have skills of handling the live questions effectively and act quickly being the organization interface to the media and public (Horsley and Barker 2002), therefore, he/she should have full knowledge and understanding of the crisis outcomes and consequences (Hunt 2011).

In some situations, the media would prefer hearing the incident response from the most senior personnel in the organization who may not be aware of the technical details; hence assigning more than one spokesperson might be suitable depending on the different level of information disclosure (Kaufmann et al. 1994). Lack of information or inconsistency in the messages delivered to the various stakeholders groups may lead to rumors and public speculations, which would increase the possibility of destroying the organizational image (Horsley and Barker 2002).

Nevertheless, Tyler (2005) raised an opposite opinion in his article for the spokesperson and messages designed as response strategy. He argued that all crisis situations and outcomes should be transparent to the stakeholders and the truth should be told to them. He claimed that speaking as one voice is suspicious because it presents the organization's truth they would like to deliver, which might be different from the reality.

Benchmarking CCM in the Public Sector of Other Countries

After exploring several scholar's opinions and theories about the research sub-topics, it is advisable to discuss some cases of CCM that has been implemented and continues to be so in some countries. This benchmarking section will provide powerful insight to support the aim of the paper, which is to recommend a unified CCM model in the public sector. It includes two benchmarking cases of the Government of Singapore and South Australia, in Australia. Singapore has a centralized department to manage crises across the Public Sector. While in Australia, a crisis is often driven from within government by elected representatives and their senior advisers. This is about the political imperatives associated with a crisis, such as protecting the party in power and its Ministers.

Singapore

The Government of Singapore has extensive efforts in crisis management, and specifically in CCM. The government has developed many strategies and plans for crisis response and has set the roles and responsibilities for all relevant parties if any crisis occurs, whether on organizational level or on the whole Government level. Within these strategies, it has been identified that The Ministry of Information, Communications and Arts (MICA) being the responsible body for "setting the tone and direction for overall government public communications, leveraging on different communications channels, working in related areas ranging from media management and public consultation to crisis communications and national marketing" and it seeks "to increase the confidence of Singaporeans in the government... and aims to promote a positive image of Singapore to key international audiences" (Ministry of Information Communications and Arts 2011).

MICA has developed guidelines for the CCM to be implemented on the organizational level for each governmental entity. As for the government level, it manages the CCM to avert any crisis outcomes to preserve the government's reputation. The guideline encourages the entities to be prepared in for any crisis and includes set of forms as a reference for the concerned parties. The following form has been developed by the Governmental Crisis Response Team, and it includes the roles and responsibilities of the communication team during crises:

Crisis Response Team Roles and Responsibilities	
Crisis Communication The crisis communication team should help to develop and review the organisation's crisis communication plans. During business contingencies, it should recommend appropriate communication responses and manage both internal and external communication.	
Key Roles and Responsibilities: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Media management Inform and update all staff of emergency situations and the corresponding measures Develop prepared lines and messages that could be used to address crisis situations <i>* You may customise the specific roles and responsibilities of this team according to your organisation's needs.</i>	
Section Lead Name: Designation: Contact No.: Alternative Contact No.:	
Section Members Name: Designation: Contact No.: Alternative Contact No.: Name: Designation: Contact No.: Alternative Contact No.:	

Table 1: Crisis Communication Team – Roles and Responsibilities
at Government of Singapore, adapted from Ministry of Health in Singapore 2001

One of the successful case studies that can be highlighted in this paper is the CCM efforts in the health sector in Singapore. Since MICA is the leading organization to manage the CCM throughout any national crisis, its role has been identified as the following:

- Drafting key communication messages for the CCM, in coordination with the Health Ministry to ensure covering all technical details accurately;
- Proposing initiatives for public communication to be executed by other governmental agencies to support the CCM plans;
- Reviewing the progress of the situation and submitting reports on the gaps that agencies need to cover in their communications; and
- Activating the International Image Task Force whose role is to maintain the country's image.

Similar to other governments, MICA recognizes that crises differ in their nature and size, therefore, an approach was developed relative to the crisis' severity. It is noteworthy that crises in Singapore are categorized from least negative impact as

Green0, Green1, Yellow, Orange and Black, which is the highest negative impact expected. For each of these categories, a communication plan is already developed and the teams are well trained to deal with the situations (Ministry of Health in Singapore 2009).

To be more specific in examining the governmental belief in CCM, the case study of the SARS crisis in Singapore was successfully managed as a result of adopting effective crisis communication that accomplished its role in managing people's perceptions, increasing awareness and at the same time maintaining the government's image and reputation by constantly presenting the government's efforts to fight the disease. Moreover, the media during the SARS played a cooperative role to support the government to ensure that the public are well informed of the situation and what all parties is doing to successfully manage the crisis (Jin et al. 2006). "At such times there is a necessity for prompt decision-making by the government, and a need to engage the public fully in whatever remedial approach it seeks to promote" said Jin et al. (2006).

The lesson learnt from this is that centralizing the efforts of CCM at the public sector level enables all communication officials to work in an integrated approach to preserve the government's reputation and spread the same communication messages during crises.

Australia:

Australia is one of the countries in which governments stress the importance of crisis management and the effective role of public information exchange. Since the September 11, 2001 attacks in USA and Bali bombings in 2002, the Australian Government has elevated crisis management as a policy priority (Australian Public Service Commission 2012), but it is important to mention that it has successful previous experiences in CCM . The Australian Public Service Commission has developed a comprehensive guideline as part of the Connecting Government efforts for crisis management; and has dedicated a specific chapter to discuss public communication being an essential factor for successful crisis management.

There have been some efforts by the government "to integrate the whole government's public affairs management to ensure that if there is a domestic terrorist crisis, careful public affairs management will reduce the scope for both rumor to replace information and for multiple or contradictory statements by different agencies" (Australian Public Service Commission 2012). Public communication should rest on five principles:

- The public has the right to receive the information unless releasing any information would affect the national security.
- Information management and media should be strategically designed and accurately communicated because they play major role in national security operations.
- All agencies are encouraged to handle their own communication, and no one to "comment on another agency's area of responsibility without obtaining approvals"
- All agencies are required to assign one point of contact for coordination as well as well trained communication teams to respond to any national security incident.
- All agencies are responsible in ensuring the existence of coordination processes with the relevant agencies, ministerial offices, and other cross agencies.

It is worth mentioning that embedding these principles within the organization and teams require training and workshops specifically designed to bring public affairs employees in various agencies together in order to improve their skills and enhance their communication and coordination across the sector (Australian Public Service Commission 2012).

To shed light on one of the successful managed crises in Australia, an interview was conducted with the then Chief Manager of Communications of the State Bank of South Australia, Mr. Tim Sauer. The background of the crisis was that the State Government of South Australia, a State of Australia was hit by a major financial crisis in 1991. The crisis revolved around the collapse of the government funded, and the bank lost its entire capital base of AUD 970 million – all public funds.

The announcement of the collapse and subsequent events illustrate a government in major crisis and how it reacted to at crisis. The events led to the government of the time being banished at the next State election and the Premier losing his job. Many questions were raised about the competency of the bank management and its performance at the State Parliament months before announcing the collapse statement. Sauer said: "The government, for its part made many reassuring statements to the Parliament and to the people about the bank, fearing that a 'run' on the bank would be catastrophic for the State's economy and deposit holders. Eventually, after months of questioning and media scrutiny the bank announced its position. The crisis was expected and planned for. The final result reflected the enormity and then the crisis was recognized".

The government communication approach to manage this crisis was using strategic honest and open communication with the public. According to Sauer, the actions taken revolved around the following:

- Ensuring all political comments about the matter came from the Office of the Premier; and the Bank comments were to come from its CEO;
- Instigating a strong line of communication between the bank's senior management and the Premier's Office;
- Being resolute in reassuring the public of the safety and security of the bank as the repository for their money;
- Reviewing all comments about the crisis by the bank and establishing a line of communication between the chief of communication for the bank and the person in the same position for the Premier; and
- Making it clear that in the event of the crisis becoming politically catastrophic, the bank's CEO would have to resign.

The communication approach was successful to contain the situation in terms of the business continuity of the bank and the deposits holdings have actually increased, especially that the bank CEO had resigned after the collapse announcement. Sauer mentioned that this was one of the success stories of the government's capabilities to maintain public trust. On the other hand, given the political situations at South of

Australia, the communication approach did not help the Premier positioning during the crisis whose popularity was suffered and the government was votes out at the next election and the Premier lost his job. Saur answered when he was asked how can the CCM be described as successful when the government itself was sacked? "Well, the Bank went from strength to strength and came out of the crisis with more lending and more deposits than it had in the beginning. So, the CCM did what it had to do to protect the Government-owned bank and ultimately the people of South Australia".

In summary, crises are part of daily life in any government, and all governments have plans to handle these events. The important lessons learnt from the above case is the frank, honest and open communication with the stakeholders.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

After a thorough exploration of the literature review to study authors' points-of-view on the areas of this research, it is important to move forward to examine the practical field of crisis management and CCM within the identified scope earlier. This chapter will present a conceptual model for CCM in the public sector in Dubai, then it will present the hypotheses developed to achieve the objectives stated at the introduction of the research paper.

Conceptual Unified CCM Model for the Public Sector

Taking the aim of conducting this research is to recommend a unified model for CCM that can be implemented in the public sector in Dubai; the literature review in the previous chapter explored several models developed by leading scholars in private and public sectors. Hence, a conceptual model has been developed from combining various factors of the studied models to be further examined during the analysis and discussion chapter. This model is designed to suit the nature of the public sector as a whole and provides a general method and guideline for each government entity to implement during crises.

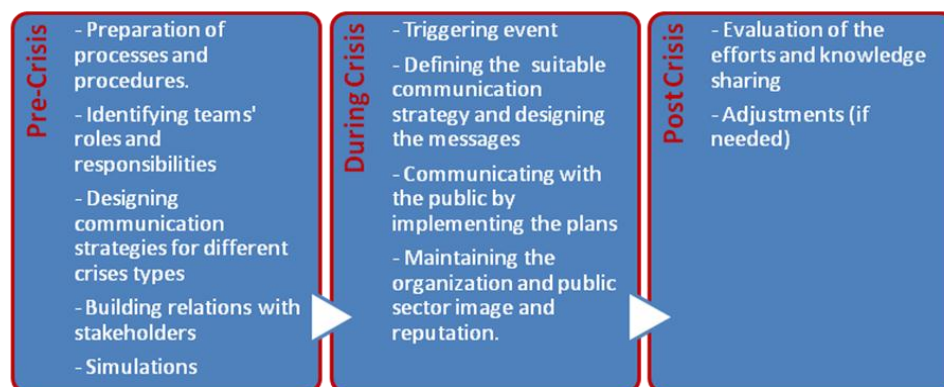


Figure 5: Conceptual CCM Model for the Public Sector

The model consists of three main stages and each stage is further detailed into operations. It encourages powerful preparedness of any organization to manage unexpected crises. It was mentioned previously that it is hard to expect a crisis to be in the shape that exactly fits plans to handle such events; however, having set of plans and processes ready and the teams well trained will increase the success of managing

the impact of such crises on the organization and the stakeholders. The stages of this model incorporate:

- The first stage is Pre-Crisis. In this stage organizations should set processes and procedures for crises that may hit the organization. It would be expected that the crises type may differ from one organization to another; however, the main principles of management would be similar across the government departments. Also, the identification of the CCM teams' roles and responsibilities should be clarified and categorized with flexibility to adjust the roles for the different natures of crises. In addition, given the nature of the public sector, major crises types can be anticipated, in which CCM team should design a communication strategy for the different types. Moreover, regular simulations should be conducted to ensure the effectiveness of the processes and the teams' preparedness to manage crises outcomes.
- The second stage outlines an approach During Crisis. Once a triggering event is recognized as a crisis, the CCM team role is to define the communication strategy suitable for the specific event, which is embedded from the pre-crisis preparations. From the selected communication strategy, the messages to be conveyed to the stakeholders should be designed and communicated effectively. Each stakeholder category should be addressed differently depending on their profile and interests. The success factor in this stage is to maintain the organization image, which would reflect positively on the public sector image and reputation.
- The last stage is Post Crisis. Once the crisis is over, the CCM team need to evaluate the effectiveness of the efforts in managing the crisis outcomes; and the public and other stakeholders have perceived the organization. All lessons learnt need to be documented and shared among the concerned parties internally and externally where applicable, to ensure the knowledge is shared among the other government departments that can benefit from it in the future. It is worth noting here that after the Post Crisis changes made on the processes, the teams should be notified and trained on these changes for future implementation.

In order to achieve the aim of this research, and support examining the conceptual unified CCM model for the public sector, it is important to achieve the objectives

presented previously. Therefore, for each objective, a hypothesis has been developed to be examined during the qualitative research that will be discussed in the following chapters.

Communication's Role in Crisis Management

It has been found in the research that almost all scholars encourage adopting effective communication in crisis management. They believe that strategic communication activities can avert the crises outcomes and impacts, which will eventually preserve the organizational reputation and image (Kaufmann et al. 1994, Hale et al. 2005, Reynolds and Seeger 2005, Chen 2009; and Garvey and Buckley 2010). This can be accomplished by adopting professional implementation of various communication tools and techniques, starting with developing comprehensive planning of messages strategies, identifying the level of information disclosure, and assigning a skilled spokesperson for critical announcements (Coombs 2004, Stephens et al. 2005 and Hunt 2011).

Moreover, many organizations acknowledge the role of communication in crisis management, and many have identified a strategic positioning for communication within the crisis management and day to day public impacts on the organization. The role has emerged from issuing media announcements and advising senior management on the nature of public statements, into including communication at the preparation stages of crisis management processes as explored in the literature. It is also important to note that the preservation of any organization's image in the public sector should be aligned with the overall image and reputation of the government. That is because any separate entity is part of the overall umbrella of the government and given the uniqueness of Dubai Government and how the international stakeholders perceive it, any success or failure would affect the government's image. This encourages the communication role to have well thought plans and high capable teams to manage the CCM. Therefore, the following hypothesis has been developed to be discussed during the interviews for this research:

Hypothesis #1: Communication plays a vital role in the success of crisis management in the public sector.

The Need for a Unified CCM Model for the Public Sector

Moving forward from the importance of communication in crisis management, it was discussed previously the importance of readiness of designing a CCM model to be used during crises affecting the public sector (Dong et al. 2011). That is because during a stressful time, limited resources and lack of sufficient information, the model is advised to be developed prior to any crisis and the teams assigned should be well trained about the procedures and their roles and responsibilities (Horsley and Barker 2002, Hale et al. 2005 and Reynolds; and Seeger 2005). Besides, it was suggested that the processes and teams should be tested through regular simulations to ensure the effectiveness of the procedures and to improve any gap that might occur (Kaufmann et al. 1994 and Hunt 2011).

Furthermore, since most crises that are potentially to hit the public sector have similar backgrounds and would require similar processes to be followed (Rosenthal and Kouzmin 1993, Baldry 1998; and Najafbagy 2011), it is encouraged to have a unified model for the whole sector since the main purpose of CCM, in this case, is to preserve the government's reputation and image, and then it can be further detailed to fit the needs of the specific organization. As a result, the following hypothesis is going to be examined, in addition to the conceptual model presented earlier:

Hypothesis #2: Adopting a unified CCM model for the public sector maintains the positive reputation of the government during crises

Stakeholders' Role in CCM

Crisis management scholars have stressed the importance of stakeholders as key 'publics' for successful implementation of the CCM processes. These stakeholders are the affected people or organizations from any crisis and they hold the responsibility of the organization to protect their interests (Coombs 2004 and Stephens et al. 2005), thus they have a major role in the success or failure in managing the crises outcomes. What is practically important in this field is the identification of stakeholders' categories that may be considered to participate effectively during CCM (Stephens et al. 2005). During the pressured time of a crisis, this categorization would help the CCM team to invite the concerned stakeholders to assist in preserving the reputational image of the organization.

The researchers advise the organizations to invest in building critical relationship with the stakeholders which will result in return-of-investment in crisis situations. These stakeholders who have gained loyalty and trust toward the organization are going to be more likely supportive in the difficult times of the organization (Ulmer 2001 and Chen 2009). Depending on the crisis situation and the affected stakeholders, certain pre-identified stakeholders would be asked or might volunteer to participate within the CCM approved strategies and plans. Hence, the hypothesis developed and should be discussed later is:

Hypothesis #3: Stakeholders involvement during CCM increases the success of managing crises' impacts and outcomes.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

After establishing the knowledge of the research topic from the literature review chapter, then creating the hypotheses to examine the knowledge, this chapter will be describing the methodology used to investigate the research topic. In order to that, an overview is provided about some research types, approaches, data collection methods and finally data analysis techniques.

Research Type

It is commonly known that research simply means collecting data and interpreting them. However, some researchers stressed on expanding the research purpose to much more than that by having a practical definition for research with a set of characteristics. Saunders et al. (2007) identified research as "something that people undertake in order to find out things in a systematic way, thereby increasing their knowledge". Also, Collis and Hussy (2009) defined research as "a systematic and methodical process of enquiry and investigation with a view to increasing knowledge". From these definitions, there are some characteristics that should be considered by the researcher before conducting his research, which are (based on Saunders et al. 2007):

- Systematic data collection in which a simple processes to be followed starting with identifying the research approach, sample respondents, questions and finally approaching the respondents.
- Systematic data interpretation in which the collected data should be further interpreted in a way that the reader can follow a logical sequence of the research process until he reaches the final outcome that makes sense.
- Clear purpose to find out something. This purpose would determine the type of research to be conducted. For example:
 - If the purpose is to clarify an understanding and gain knowledge through finding out insights and knowledge, then the *exploratory studies* will be used.
 - Another type is *descriptive studies* in which the research purpose is to have an accurate portray of a situation or person. This type can be an extension of the previous type in which it might be used to provide a

full picture of a situation and then to explore the knowledge about the situation.

- The other type is the *explanatory studies*, which is used to create a relation between the problem and the variables.

Given the nature of the dissertation scope, which is to recommend a model that can be used across a specific number of organizations, the exploratory research type is used to provide a clear understanding of the research topic as well as an analysis that would help the researcher to gain comprehensive knowledge in the field of CCM.

Research Approach

Adding to the research types, there are mainly two methods commonly used in order to systematically collect the data and interpret them, which are quantitative and qualitative approaches (Saunders et al. 2007; and Collis and Hussy 2009). The quantitative research involves collecting data that result in numeric meanings and standardized data, and then it would be analyzed through diagrams and statistics. The collected numeric data are generally meaningless to people unless they are analyzed and become information. The analysis of quantitative approach can be presented through graphs, charts or statistics that show relationship between various research variables (Saunders et al. 2007).

The qualitative approach is based on expressed meanings by people in which the collection of data requires classification of information collected; and then it will be analyzed through conceptualization of the ideas. The qualitative data are descriptive, similar to the quantitative ones, but they are considered to collect soft data unlike the quantitative ones that collect numeric hard data. It involves a process of developing data categorization, allocating units of original data collected to the specific category, recognizing relationship between the various categories and testing hypotheses to find out the conclusion (Saunders et al. 2007). The qualitative approach also requires that the data are put into a context in order to be understood (Collis and Hussy 2009). If the research purpose involves getting data from large sample respondents, the quantitative approach would be suitable for it. As for the qualitative approach, it

would be more appropriate if the sample size is small and some in-depth information is required to support the research aim and objectives.

In order to gain the required comprehensive knowledge and comparing it with the existing literature, the qualitative research approach was used in this paper. This approach will enable the researcher to obtain in-depth information about the current practices and statuses in the selected organizations, to provide different perspectives of the respondents to examine the hypotheses; and to reflect the subjective point of views comprehensively for the proposed CCM model. It will also include some descriptive cases from the examined organizations to draw a practical picture of the current practices that would support the researcher final outcome.

Data Collection Method

After defining the research type and approach, the research should move forward with deciding which data collection tool to be used. There are several tools associated with the qualitative approach (selected for this paper). First of all, personal interview, which is a useful guided-conversation for in-depth data collection (Yin 2009). The interviews type may vary from being highly structured, semi structured or unstructured (Saunders et al. 2007). For each type, the interview can be in-depth in which the information flow can be very detailed; or focused in which the researcher facilitate the meeting with a pre-set of questions.

According to Saunders et al. (2007), structured interviews are based on questionnaires that are taken from pre-set of questions, which would allow the respondent to answer in a standardized manner by relating the answers to pre-coded questions. Where in the semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to have a set of questions and the respondent would cover all required question without a sequence. This type provides comfort for the interviewee and gives him the time to talk freely and in-depth; however, the interviewer needs to ensure that questions were answered during the meeting. The unstructured interview enables the interviewee to talk about the issues freely as they come within an informal environment.

Focus group type is also widely used to for qualitative data collection. It involves inviting a group of participants to discuss a structured or semi-structured set of questions in order to gain different opinions of the sample size. It is perceived as "flexible and cost effective method of exploring attitudes, experiences, and responses of non-random samples of people who fit a particular profile" (Sofaer 2002).

Another tool for data collection is participant observation. This type attempts to have the researcher being part of the organization being examined and shares its life and activities, which will enable him to provide experimental observation of what had happened and along with his feelings. This type of research is mostly used for sociology and anthropology, and it can be successfully used in the field of business management in combination of other types (Saunders et al. 2007).

For the purpose of this research paper, the main tool used for data collection was semi-structured focused interviews in addition to a secondary data collection tool. The interviews were conducted between the researcher and two senior representatives of the Communication departments in the selected organizations. The selection criterion was based on the large-sized services provided for the public residing in Dubai. The reason for selecting this criterion depended on the nature of the project scope that targets the public sector, in which there is one specialized service provider for each industry.

Prior to the data collection, an invitation email along with a pre set of questions were sent to seven government organizations to participate in this research (Dubai Police, Dubai Municipality, The General Secretariat of the Executive Council, Roads and Transport Authority, Dubai Electricity and Water Authority, Dubai Health Authority and Disasters and Crisis Management Department in Dubai). Unfortunately, due to the unavailability of some respondents to answer the questions plus some had restrictions in disclosing some confidential information, only two organizations participated in this research, Dubai Police and Dubai Municipality. Both interviews were conducted in Arabic, in which one interview was conducted at the respondent's office and took around two hours; and the other one was a phone interview that took around twenty minutes. The data collected was through note-taking in addition to some documents sent through emails.

Respondents

The research respondents are senior communication representatives from the following listed entities. They are members of the CCM teams in their organizations, beside their day to day jobs.

- *Dubai Police:*

Dubai Police is an integral part of the UAE police force that was established in 1956. "Its mission is to improve the quality of life, in the Country, by operating in accordance with the constitutional rights to enforce the law and maintain security and safety of the community and of everyone living in the Country". It is well known to be "the best security institution locally, regionally and internationally". That is because of adopting excellence and quality measures to operate its duties with powerful strategic planning (Dubai Police 2012). Its stakeholders include the leadership of the Emirate, government bodies, private organizations, all public residing in the city, local and international media; and many others.

- *Dubai Municipality:*

Dubai Municipality is one of the vital government organizations that cater to providing large scale services in Dubai. Its mission is to "work to plan, design, build and manage the municipal infrastructure, facilities and services through the appropriate investment in its human and other resources maintaining the sustainable development". It consists of six major sector departments to achieve this mission which are: Environment Health and Safety Control, Environment and Public Health Services, Planning and Engineering, International Affairs and Partnership, General Support and Corporate Support (Dubai Municipality 2012). Its stakeholders include the leadership of the Emirate, government bodies, private organizations, all public residing in the Emirate, local and international media; and many others.

Data Analysis

The data analysis section of any research is the most important section because it reflects the findings from the literature on the real implementation of the theories. It is a strategy that needs to be well established by the researcher since it provides the

result of the hypotheses tested and paves the way towards the research paper conclusion (Yin 2009).

Yin (2009) has mentioned in his articles five techniques for data analysis that can be used for qualitative research approach, which are:

- **Pattern Matching:** it is a common analytical technique used by the researchers who develop a pattern theory that is derived from an existing theory that built a conceptual framework. In this type, the framework validity is questioned by the research question to test its validity, therefore the data analysis would support the researcher to agree or disagree with the conceptual framework.
- **Explanation Building:** it is a process technique that requires a series of analysis to examine the statement developed for the research, by comparing different cases with the initial one repeatedly until the finding satisfactory results.
- **Time Series Analysis:** it attempts to create patterns of analysis over time series, in order to allow different comparisons over different time periods.
- **Logic Models:** it is a technique to create a pattern of "cause-effect-cause-effect". The observed events flow in this type creates a logical pattern between the data analysis and the literature.
- **Cross-Case Synthesis:** it involves analyzing multiple cases within the research paper. Having many cases helps developing strong findings to support the research aim and questions.

Since the aim of this research paper is to recommend a unified model based on existing theories, and a conceptual framework was developed in the previous chapter, the chosen technique for data analysis is pattern matching. The conceptual model was presented to the interviewees and they have shared their comments to validate it.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion

The analysis and hypotheses relating to propositions for CCM across the government in Dubai are generated through academic and practical research. Academic, because scholars have developed huge amount of studies that cannot be ignored and have become the reference for several organizations who have excelled in the field of CCM; and practical because it is required to examine the current practices in the targeted organizations in order to develop new approaches. That is a hands-on task of investigation as much as research.

Having collected the data through interviews and desk research, as identified in the methodology, this chapter discusses the findings gained from the respondents. The discussion will be aligned with the hypotheses presented previously in order to showcase a clear pattern matching. Each section includes the findings from each case; and then it shows the similarities between them. Finally, it moves toward presenting the proposed unified CCM model for the public sector.

Communication's Role in Crisis Management

It was found from researching the work of scholars, or experts in the field of CCM that communication plays a vital role in the success of crisis management. Therefore, many scholars have included communication within the management process to ensure that organizations recognize the powerful role of communication in producing the best results. As for the data collected to support the literature, the following is an analysis of what was found.

Case 1

Dubai Police is the responsible body for the Emirate's Crises and Disasters Management, which is a local branch of the federal committee of the UAE. It has competent systems and individuals to manage any crisis that might hit. On the organizational level, the interviewee pointed out that Dubai Police has the professional technical capabilities to manage the crises at different stages, and that is run from the Operations Department. This department follows a process of three stages, in which roles and responsibilities are well identified.

The first stage is pre-crisis, here managers ensure that all processes and systems are in place; and the employees are well trained on different tasks to manage the crises.

Given the nature of the Police work, the security expertise varies so as their individuals' competencies and capabilities. As for the communication, the members are trained as well on the best techniques to set strategies and plans for media management during crises and therefore to assist management of public perception.

The second stage of the process, in which a triggering event occurs, crystallizes the nature of the event and it then is recognized as a crisis for purposes of efficient management. There are several criteria to identify crises at Dubai Police and for each criterion the crisis level is identified. For example, if an accident happens and the death rate is over twenty people, then it is considered to be a high crisis that requires extensive operations procedures to be implemented. For such an incident, the Operations Department, immediately assigns specialized teams that are deployed on-site in different locations according to priority, as well as a team that should be located at the command centre. At this stage, the communication plays an active role in setting the communication strategies and messages that should be conveyed to various stakeholders, especially the media. Depending on the crisis type and affected stakeholders' types, the interviewee declared some factors that are need to be considered for successful CCM. Those factors include:

- Identifying the roles and responsibilities of the CCM teams. From the main team, sub-teams can be established to be distributed between various locations, but they all need to have leaders who report to an identified and appropriately authorized communication person at the crisis management team. It is important to note that all roles and responsibilities along with the contact numbers should be available for the command centre for easy reference especially that the emergency situation requires swift responses from all people.
- Identifying the communication strategy, plans and messages for the overall case. The communication leader sets the strategy and plans after discussing the options with the Chief Commander and/or Deputy Chief and some selected relevant personnel.
- Identifying the stakeholders as well as the tools and techniques to approach them. Since the crisis does not allow leisure time to identify them, a key

success factor here is the experience and involvement of the communication personnel to identify the relevant stakeholders and what to communicate to them.

Adding to the communication's role at this stage, it is important to ensure that the identified spokespersons are briefed on the messages they need to communicate to the public and it has been perceived by the public that the spokespersons are capable and powerful to avert crises outcomes. Building on the capacity to create this perception, the interviewee gave an example of an incident that occurred in one of the active areas in Dubai, after which it was recognized as a crisis. The operational specialized teams of Dubai Police moved to the location to rescue victims of the crisis. Given the high priority level of this crisis, the Ruler of the Emirate had asked the Police Chief Commander to adopt the case and manage its communications. From this experience, plus many others, it is suggested that the public has drawn a positive perception of Dubai Police, in particular that it can successfully overcome many situations that it is likely to face through its vast expertise and capabilities; and most importantly its ability to reduce the negative impact of crises that might affect the government reputation and image.

The third stage is the post-crisis stage where the concerned departments prepare their reports of the causes and effects of what had happened. At the same time, communication continues to actively contain the situation and communicate any updates to the public. During this stage, the communication ensures that accurate information flows to the public and that it is within the identified strategy. Further, if any additional information is available, it is put within an appropriate context to be communicated to the public to ensure maintaining the positive image of the organization and the Emirate. Dubai's uniqueness being the leading city in several competitiveness factors requires that every separate entity needs to consider the government's image in their CCM activities.

It is important to note that the interviewee stressed on some success factors for powerful communication role in the crisis management. The first factor is the Communication position within the decision making team. Being part of this team enables the communication personnel to comment on every report and apply the appropriate ones effectively to be communicated to the public. Also, this positioning

allows the communication to be close to the highest authority, therefore limiting the chance of inaccuracy and facilitate the exchange of directional strategies that would help in minimizing any negative effects arising from the crisis.

The other success factor is the swift and clear communication with the media. It is known that the media can be a blessing to support the organization's effort during CCM; however, some media outlets have opposite directions that need to be efficiently and effectively managed by opening clear communication with direct messages. According to the interviewee, this approach enhances the organizational confidence in the public perception, which is very much needed during crises to maintain the organizational image as well as the public and stakeholders' confidence and perceptions. Using the right language and means to reach the stakeholders is another success factor that should be considered. This factor requires knowing the stakeholder type, which should mean knowing what they want to hear and the language in which to communicate; and therefore reaching them using the powerful tools to convey the messages and ensure that they will understand it. It is important to speak to the public in everyday language rather than being too technical or assuming knowledge of any matter.

From the interview finding, it can be noticed that the entity adopts communication extensively and professionally in crisis management because of its belief on the important role of effective communication to avoid or minimize any fallout or undesired outcomes.

Case 2

Dubai Municipality, which consists of various sectors serving the Emirate, has strategic positioning in the government sector in the field of disasters and crises management. It has established several co-operations and partnerships with other entities, such as the Disasters and Crises Management Department of Dubai Police, in order to have integrated efforts to manage crises and to maintain the positive image and reputation of the Emirate by averting or minimizing any negative outcomes (AlIttihad 2011).

From the existence of the official processes of crisis management, the entity has developed a customized guideline for CCM activities and process to identify communication's role during the pressure time of crises situations. This guideline consists of detailed sections required for such a huge organization serving a large number of people. In order to ensure the alignment of the communication activities along with other governmental bodies, it has developed the guideline in compliance with the General Guideline of Government Communication of Dubai. Some of the guideline sections received by the researcher are:

- Crises classification, which distinguishes the crises that affect the internal department, from the ones affecting the whole organization and the ones that might have negative impact on the Emirate's image. The crises types include all risks, emergencies, disasters and rumors that affect the organization and the city.
- Stakeholders' categories have been identified as internal audiences such as the CCM team members, organization employees and the senior management. Another category is external stakeholders, which includes Dubai residents, UAE society, strategic partners from other government bodies and others. Additionally, media has a separate category that includes print media, TV channels, radio stations and websites.
- CCM team that consists of the members from the Corporate PR and Marketing Departments, in which each member has a specialty role during crises. The head of this team is the Director of the Department who reports directly to the Director General. This reporting line facilitates quick decisions taken directly from the highest decision maker in the organization.
- Communication procedures that identify the information disclosure criteria to different stakeholders' groups and providing a range of communication tools that can be used during crises such as: TV and radio programs, media conferences, mobile devices and others. The selection of these tools depends on the crisis effect level and a decision of the best medium for communication of particular information.
- Training plans required for the CCM team members that would be required enhance their skills during crises. In addition to media training for the top management to assist if they are to be interviewed by the media during crises.
- CCM process that includes two main stages:

- First stage: internal communication planning
 - Once a triggering event happens and it has been identified as a crisis, the CCM team is called for a meeting.
 - Defining the media centre location to ensure that only official information is communicated to the public.
 - Assigning the spokesperson and the media coordinator to follow up on the event updates.
 - Gathering information and ensuring its accuracy
- Second stage: external communication planning
 - Developing a few scenarios of the communication plans depending on the crisis type. For example, construction and health disasters can be managed on the department level, where natural disasters and technological risks should be managed on the Emirate's level.
 - Implementing the approved communication plan using the identified media tools.
 - Monitoring the media coverage on a daily basis and analyzing the effects of the published news and reports.
 - Evaluating the effects and preparing post crisis reports.

Another document the researcher was referred to for data collection on CCM practice at the entity was the government communications guideline. This reference includes one of the success factors of CCM which is identifying the spokespersons. According to this reference, the spokesperson is determined depending on the crisis type recognized. For example, if the crisis is affecting the overall image of the organization, then the Director General would be the spokesperson, but if it is related to environmental and health issues, then the Assistant Director General of this sector would be assigned for any official statements and announcements.

From the explanation provided about this case, it is noticeable that the entity is efficient in regulating the process of adopting CCM within the organization and it publishes its efforts in the media as part of the transparency policy it has (AlItihad 2010). However, there are opportunities to establish techniques on other

communication aspects for CCM, such as the organizational communication strategy for crises and the approaches that fit the organization needs in such situations.

In a nutshell, both cases represent the effective role of communication during crisis management, and they have official CCM process, identified spokespersons; and well trained teams for this purpose. They both put extensive efforts to achieve one major aim, which is to protect and maintain the positive image of the organization and the Emirate. Although both cases' approaches are different, they both stressed the importance of communication's role in crisis management, which supports the hypothesis developed earlier:

Hypothesis #1: Communication plays a vital role in the success of crisis management in the public sector.

The Need for a Unified CCM Model

Given the fact that the Emirate is a fast growing city with many projects being established to accommodate a growing population and many changes in the way things are done, it would be expected that from time to time events designated as 'crises' will occur. In addition to that, all these changes require several entities to work in an integrated way to keep up the high standards of service delivery. Therefore, it would be expected there will be some crises that affect several entities, which in turn would affect the whole public sector. The most important matter is to be prepared for any shared crises with clear guidance on the roles and responsibilities of each concerned organization and its personnel. Having a unified model for CCM for the public sector would increase the certainty of considering all critical success factors during various stages of the process. Following is an interpretation the interviewees' feedback on this matter.

Case 1

From the beginning of the interview, the interviewee stressed the fact that many crises require Dubai Police involvement to manage them operationally, communicating the nature of the event, the challenges being faced and the progress in successfully managing the event. There are strong relations with the other entities according to the various specialties that need to be integrated to serve the whole sector. He mentioned that many situations or crises require more than one entity to manage it. In such cases,

having separate processes for each relevant entity could create some conflicts in some areas where the situation would require immediate resolution rather than setting roles and responsibilities, especially that in the current situation every entity has its own processes and procedures. There is no doubt that if there is conflict in the management of a crisis, whether that be differing but incompatible approaches or seniority disputes, the potential for failure increases significantly. He gave an example of a plane crash case that happened in Dubai a few years ago. There were more than six governmental bodies involved in the crisis management. Therefore, because there was no uniform approach, there was confusion regarding who would respond to the media, and the decision was made later to assign the concerned authority to take the communication lead, with the input provided from the other entities. After that, there has been a gentleman's agreement between the entities that included some roles in such incidents. He continued that having had a clear process of the roles and responsibilities across the public sector in place, there would not have been a conflict that delayed some important announcements. Although, it is important to mention that all teams worked very hard and cooperated professionally with each other to manage the crisis.

The requirement for a unified process model has emerged after recognizing several joint crises that needed a clear, immediate guidance to be followed, especially that all entities work towards maintaining the Emirate's reputation management. Furthermore, it is a well known practice in other countries to have centralized processes, and specifically for CCM, where each entity can further detail it to fit its needs. To further support this requirement, the interviewee said: "I strongly recommend having a unified CCM model to be implemented across the public sector in Dubai so we can all work in the same alignment. However, this process model needs to be flexible to accommodate the different needs of the entity's businesses and to suit various crises types".

Case 2

The entity plays a role in the Emirate to manage several municipal sectors serving the public. It works in collaboration with other entities, be it governmental or private, in order to achieve the highest standards of expertise and service delivery. Stressing this point, the interviewee said: "...almost all our projects and services integrate with other

organizations' services to provide the best services for the customers." The entity is perhaps the most visible to the public, through the services it provides. Because of this, it has even more need to be precise and efficient in the way it handles its communication, especially in a time of crisis when lack of information causes people to create their own 'truth'.

According to the interviewee, in the case of joint crises, the organizations generally know their roles since the service scope is identified according to the entity specific mandates and roles. However, this fact would not avoid some conflicts to arise at difficult or challenging times. During crises, the concerned organization would implement the process it adopts internally to manage the specific effect arising from the crisis but in coordination with the others. From experiences, many such incidents were managed separately; therefore, some conflicts arose in some of those situations. For example, there was a case of a fall off an under-construction building in Dubai. There were approximately four entities concerned in this incident; and each of these entities had declared a separate statement in the media. One of the issues captured by the media in this practice was the different number of causalities declared by the entities. This difference caused confusion and panic in the public especially that the location was close to a residential area. In the following day, the four entities agreed on assigning one spokesperson to communicate any statements to the media and any further report findings. However, this was after the event and the lessons of the need to have a coordinated approach were learned too late for the most efficient outcome for all stakeholders at all stages of the crisis.

More information was needed to analyze this crisis and the communication approaches taken for other examples provided, but according to the interviewee, due to some confidentiality restrictions the crisis details and the entities involved are not mentioned in this research.

When the interviewee was asked about his point-of-view to develop a unified CCM process to be implemented across the government, he was positive about it and mentioned that the entity is always willing to support any idea to preserve the government's perception. They can be part of the development stage especially that the organization and the teams have in-depth knowledge and experience in crisis management and specifically in CCM.

In summary, both cases presented some incidents in which joint crises are expected to happen and integrated efforts are needed to overcome the situations. Both interviewees were asked the same question about their opinion on having a unified CCM model to be implemented and they have agreed on it. This finding positively supports the hypothesis discussed previously, which is:

Hypothesis #2: Adopting a unified CCM model for the public sector maintains the positive reputation of the government during crises.

Stakeholders' Role in CCM

Stakeholders play a major role in the success or failure of CCM. That is because stakeholders, at any level, have an interest in the organization that is experiencing the crisis event. They can be the affected people from the crisis or can affect the outcomes of the crisis. In both cases, they need to be classified at different stages of CCM in order to effectively communicate with them.

Case 1

"Our stakeholders are the success factors for the major CCM activities happened recently," said the interviewee. There might be several classification methods for stakeholders, but first of all they should be categorized being the affected stakeholders and the ones that are going to have an impact driven from the crisis. It is important to note that Dubai is an international city with a high level of expatriates from many different countries. This diverse population base complicates the job of communication in a crisis, because in many cases the crisis will be of international interest and those interests can have quite different cultural needs. For instance when any expatriate is involved in a high profile legal matter in Dubai it is likely the Consul for that country will interact with Dubai Police. In the case of classifying the stakeholders as the affected people, Dubai Police ensures that the communication strategy should address the facts of what happened and convey it using the appropriate means to these affected people to contain their responses, feedback, feelings, losses and others.

Understanding the stakeholders' types with their backgrounds and needs helps the CCM team to know what information to share with them and how to reach them. For

example, in a murder incident of a former Chechen official in Dubai, the entity led by the Chief Commander, used a proactive communication strategy to communicate to the media the incident in what Dubai Police say was a record time before any news of the event had leaked out or been passed on through a third party. This was a highly delicate matter and the importance of containing information, so that what was made public was accurate and appropriate was of the highest importance and touched on inter-governmental relations. This event generated news around the world, so Dubai Police were on show internationally as well as within the Emirates. The organization itself became the source of information to all international media, which helped closing any doors for rumors and respected the needs of people outside of Dubai. A key part of the communication strategy implemented for that case was to update the public and other relevant people on a regular basis.

The other stakeholders involvement is when some selected people would support the CCM team during the process by communicating with other stakeholders, be it the media or public. According to the interviewee, Dubai Police has a set of categories with background details and contact about their stakeholders. During crises, some categorization might be amended depending on the situation requirements and the experience and relations are the success factors for using these stakeholders to play a role in the CCM. It is always beneficial to create a relationship with these stakeholders to support the organization during crises, considering that every stakeholder looks for an added value out of this relation. For example, after the re-occurrence of several unethical scenes in Dubai from some nationalities where some cases had legal disputes that would have caused media crisis, the embassies of some countries had cooperated with the Police to create an awareness campaign for their citizens to spread the cultural knowledge of the country. The embassies, being the stakeholders of these situations, played a positive supporting role with Dubai Police in order to minimize the occurrence of such crimes.

Case 2

Dubai Municipality appreciates the role of stakeholders in CCM. This fact is noticeable from its regular communication activities and from the CCM guideline explained earlier. The internal stakeholders, who are classified as CCM team members, all organization employees and top management, are considered during any

communication activity related to any internal crisis hits the organization that would affect their operation. That is because these people are the organization's front-line, its ambassadors and the people who have a right to know what their entity is facing and how it is handling an event like a crisis. If the employees would hear their entity's news in the media or from others first, this might generate another problem, which is low morale. An example of internal crisis provided by the interviewee might be a technical issue that would cause a system shutdown in which the employees would not be able to process internal operational tasks, and to provide services to external customers, which would become an external crisis by then. In such cases, the CCM team would set their communication approach to communicate the incident facts in addition to the messages needed to be conveyed to the third level stakeholders. The worst possible scenario in such an event is for a staff member, who interacts with external stakeholders, telling them that they (the staff member) do not know about the event and cannot help!

As for the external stakeholders, they have been classified as residents, governmental partners and the media. During the external crisis, the CCM team identifies the concerned stakeholders so as to set the communication strategy and messages. The top management is always considered as a first priority stakeholder because of their positioning being the decision makers on actions to avert or contain the crisis and to develop and communicate messages for and to the media, plus they have the need to know about what happens in the organization. Then, the media comes as one of the priority stakeholders because generally, it plays a supportive role to the CCM process in which it communicates the required messages to reach the public, but it also depends on the crisis type and the affected stakeholders. It is important to note that this is not the case in many countries around the world, where free press is very common and the role of the media is to scrutinize as well as report. In these cases the need for CCM is even greater and almost certainly more complex.

According to the interviewee, during the pressure time of crises with the limited resources, it would be more practical to reach one stakeholder who would take the lead to communicate to the other identified target audiences. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that the relationship built with the media during the past years is the success factor for the organization to trust them and involve them within the

CCM with the aim to minimize any negative impact. This relationship has succeeded between both parties because of the media's faith in the organizational capabilities and transparency to exchange information, as much as possible, and the organization's trust in some leading, local media outlets.

The interviewee responses to the questions show that considering the stakeholders during crises is a definite practice that adds value to the success of CCM aim. Furthermore, it is a key requirement for success in defending and enhancing the reputation of the organization.

After discussing both cases that stress the importance of stakeholders' role in crisis management and the added value that can be gained to the success of CCM aim, it can be said that this conclusion supports the hypothesis developed for this research, which is:

Hypothesis #3: Stakeholders involvement during CCM increases the success of managing crises' impacts and outcomes.

CCM Success Story from Case 1

One of the dominant success stories of which Dubai Police is proud is the murder case of a former Palestinian official in Dubai few years ago. This case was successfully managed through communication, which was employed to present the organizational capabilities and competencies and to maintain the Emirate's reputation internationally. The case started with identifying the murder in a hotel and all evidences were ambiguous especially as the concerned teams had faced such a crime for the first time. Communication played a major role in keeping the local and international media updated on the case until the final crime scenario identified. The communication strategy defined for this specific case consisted of the following:

- CCM team: consisted of senior decision makers mainly from three local entities beside one from the federal government.
- Stakeholder identification: local and international bodies, such as international security organizations and international media outlets.
- Communication objectives: to rehabilitate the security image of the Police and the Emirate, to enhance confidence in the Emirate security capabilities; and to present the country's security capabilities.

- Communication tools: presenting the murder plan and execution in a scenario format by using real material recorded in the Emirate's various locations, which was combined by the internal capabilities. This evidence was presented at a media conference to which local and international media were invited. The spokesperson used bilingual communication, Arabic and English, to communicate to the media to ensure the delivery of the correct communication messages. Since the audiences apparently were convinced of the capabilities and expertise of the country's security, some of these stakeholders have adopted the case to present Dubai Police positively internationally.

According to the interviewee, this success story showcases the success of the relevant expertise within Dubai Police and certainly supports the success of the communication role. Nevertheless, any success would face challenges during its process where in the teams have to overcome until the crisis is resolved. One of these challenges in this story is that the pressure load on the team was mainly the response speed. They were expected to respond quickly but in a professional manner after confirming that all information was accurate. Also, sometimes due to some political cases where the communication is unable to respond to some stakeholders; however, they needed to act professionally to create a suitable environment to provide factual information without leaving room for any undesired repercussions.

Unified CCM Model for the Public Sector

The aim of conducting this research is to recommend a unified model for CCM to be implemented across the public sector. In order to achieve this aim, some objectives were set, at the introduction chapter, and were discussed in various sections of the paper. The objectives were: identifying crises and their effect on the public sector, investigating communication role in CCM, benchmarking other public sectors practices and finally examining current practices of some government entities in CCM. After achieving these objectives, this paper can conclude with achieving the aim to recommend the unified CCM model for the public sector in Dubai in order to achieve consistency of the practices that will eventually preserve the Emirate's positive image and reputation.

Both the literature review and the discussion findings support the framework presented in the model, which consists of three main stages: Pre-Crisis, During Crisis and Post-Crisis. The conceptualized model presented in a previous chapter has been modified by adding some descriptive sub-stages, as shown below. Hence, this would be the final outcome of this research paper.

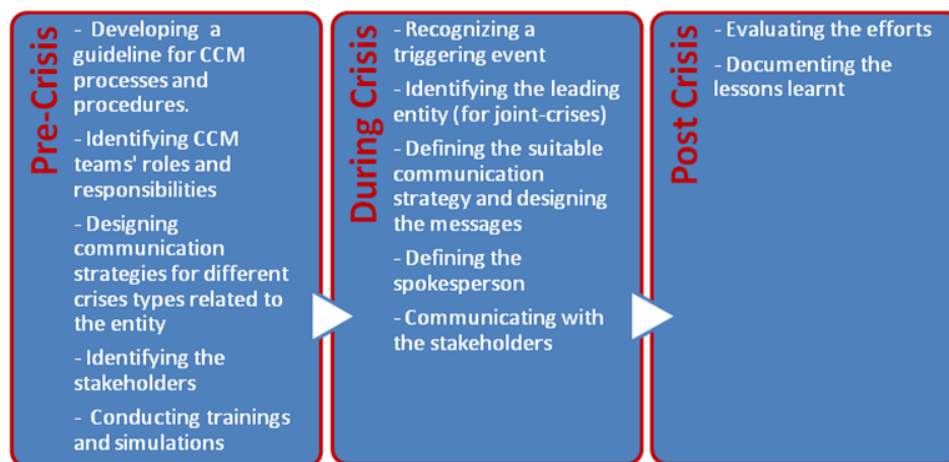


Figure 6: Proposed CCM Model for the Public Sector

Pre-Crisis Stage:

- Developing a guideline for CCM processes and procedures. This guideline should be inherited from the model since it provides general unified processes; however it should be customized to serve the entity's specific business needs.
- Identifying CCM teams' roles and responsibilities depending on the requirements of various crises types. This stage would encourage identifying the capabilities required for the roles and responsibilities, hence some individuals would need development plans to meet the expectations of managing crises outcomes.
- Designing communication strategies for different crises types related to the entity. The CCM team should explore various strategies and define selected strategies to be implemented that should be aligned with the overall organizational strategy.

- Identifying the stakeholders at different levels, for example, internal stakeholders can include top management, employees, and their families; and the external stakeholders can be the leadership, local residents, local media, international media and others. Each of these stakeholders requires a different communication approach that needs to be identified at this stage in order to target them wisely and appropriately at crises times.
- Conducting trainings and simulations. It is essential for the teams to be trained on the CCM process to ensure the effectiveness of the processes and the teams' preparedness and then to adjust any gaps if necessary. Also, this exercise focuses on the importance of conducting simulation especially for joint crises, to further improve the capabilities and the procedures.

During Crisis Stage:

- Recognizing the crisis from a triggering event. Once the situation is recognized as a crisis, the processes identified in the previous stage should be followed.
- Identifying the leading entity. For the joint crises, identifying the leading entity is crucial because it will take the lead to communicate to external stakeholders. This does not mean that the CCM of other concerned entities should not get involved, on the contrary; they can always support with their expertise and may be considered as supportive stakeholders to convey the same messages.
- Defining the suitable communication strategy and designing the messages to be communicated to the stakeholders based on the crisis type, affected stakeholders and severity of the outcomes.
- Defining the spokesperson to communicate to the media the approved messages. This can be done after defining the strategy if it would encourage assigning more than one spokesperson for corporate and technical statements. Or it can be done while defining the leading entity in the case of joint crises where usually the most senior official is the spokesperson.
- Communicating with the stakeholders by implementing the communication strategy and plans. Each stakeholder category should be addressed differently depending on their profile and interests. The success factor in this stage is to maintain the organization reputation and image.

Post Crisis Stage

- Evaluating the efforts and the effectiveness of CCM in managing the crisis outcomes, in addition to understanding the public and other stakeholders' perception toward the entity. This evaluation can be carried out through media monitoring, focus groups surveys and other tools.
- Documenting the lessons learnt at various sub-stages of CCM processes and sharing it with the concerned parties internally and externally where applicable. This activity ensures that the knowledge is shared among the other government departments that can benefit from it in the future. Also, if any change is made on the processes as a result of this activity, the team members should be notified and trained on these changes for future implementation.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The research discussed CCM and importance of adopting a unified CCM model in the public sector. This was done by having an extensive literature review in the field of the research topic, including the concept of crisis management in organizations with providing highlights of the general process to manage crises, in addition to identifying the criteria of crises affecting the public sector. Following that, CCM was introduced to discuss the importance of communication role in managing crises, exploring four models of CCM and three communication messages strategy types; beside it stressed on the stakeholders' role for successful CCM. Moreover, some success factors for CCM were explained such as teams' roles and responsibilities; and crisis spokesperson. What is more, a benchmarking section was included that discussed two cases from Singapore and Australia to stress on the role of communication in the public sector's crisis management.

From the literature review findings, a conceptual CCM model for the public sector was developed. To examine the effectiveness of the model, some data collection from the sector was required; therefore, the methodology chapter was followed. The data collected was from two major government entities whom their communication representatives were interviewed. The interviews covered the areas of communication role in crisis management, the process on the organizational level as well as the joint crises that cause impacts on the Emirate's reputation; and how stakeholders' can play supportive role for successful CCM.

Then, the collected data was interpreted in the analysis and discussion chapter, in which the finding supported the hypotheses presented previously: 1. communication plays a vital role in the success of crisis management in the public sector, 2. adopting a unified CCM model for the public sector maintains the positive reputation of the government during crises; and 3. stakeholders involvement during CCM increases the success of managing crises' impacts and outcomes. This finding resulted in achieving the aim of the research, by proposing a unified CCM for the public sector that consists of three main stages from three stages: pre, during and post crisis. In each stage, some

actions are required to be taken by the communication departments at the organizations to ensure effective implementation of the model.

Recommendations

The research analysis and findings had derived some recommendations that would support successful CCM practices in the government organizations, which would eventually support maintain the positive image and reputation of the organization and the government. The following are some recommendations that can be endorsed by the organizations:

- It is advisable to identify the stakeholders and build critical relationship with them during regular days, which would pay back during difficult times (Chen 2009). From the cases discussed previously, the stakeholders played active supportive role in several occasions to preserve the public sector's image, especially the media. It is important to involve them during day-to-day business so they understand the background of the organization and the efforts paid for the society, which will facilitate involving them to voice out the corporate messages and to endorse its efforts.
- It is suggested to utilize the lessons learnt from previous crises locally and internationally. Then, the possible crises that would possibly hit and affect public sector, should be grouped as clusters or families. According to Coombs (2004), grouping crises would enable the crisis management teams to develop plans per cluster rather than each crisis type, and the same can be employed for CCM. This suggestion encourages knowledge sharing among almost all organizations within the sector, which would result in more effective cooperation and integrated efforts.
- It is recommended to have regular simulations of CCM as part of the pre-crisis. During these simulations, the concerned people are actually living the perception, emotions and behaviors occur during real time of crisis. Therefore, it is a useful exercise to assess the effectiveness of the current processes and procedures and modify any if required. Also, it is effective way to examine the individuals' capabilities and skills that are needed to maintain organization and

public sector image and reputation (Haperen 2001). It allows the managements to have a holistic feedback on the future developments and enhancements to adopt the best strategies to preserve its image.

- It is encouraged to use most updated communication tools to reach the stakeholders. It was found earlier that every stakeholder type requires a different way to be reached (Hunt 2011). Given the fast growing world of technology, new tools are being imported in the market and widely used by different people, such as social media (Chen 2009). People tend to follow the news on social media rather than the traditional ones due to their confidence of speed of news exchange. Therefore, these social media tools can be utilized to send the CCM messages identified to the stakeholders using videos to be uploaded on YouTube, or quick statuses updates to be posted on Twitter, or some detailed information with pictures to be shared on Facebook. However, these tools should be wisely used after considering all aspects of communication risks in order to avoid any repercussions as mentioned by the interviewee of case 1 because these tools reach mass population, and controlling the negative interpretation is not always easy.
- It is recommended to develop a general CCM guideline for the public sector that includes many aspects for successful CCM practices. This guideline should be developed by several well-knowledgeable organizations in the field to promote the participatory efforts, which would ensure the endorsement of the content.
- Adding to the previous recommendation, it would be advisable to identify a centralized body to manage the unified CCM processes, strategies, simulations and other activities, similar to the Singaporean practice discussed previously. This centralization should be flexible in the sense of giving the organizations the opportunities to customize their own activities that should be aligned with their business nature, strategies and stakeholders.

Limitations and Future Research

Given the nature of the research topic to examine some sensitive facts at the government entities, has limited the cases discussed in the paper. Although several organizations were officially invited to participate in this research, they have rejected due to the confidentiality which requires complicated approval from the managements. The analyzed data came from two major entities serving a large number of stakeholders, the proposed model required more entities to critically challenge it in order to come up with an integrated outcome that can be implemented in the public sector.

For future research, it would be recommended to develop an integrated CCM model that combines different crises types and the possible messages strategies required to manage the outcomes. This approach would require the coming researchers to further examine the current practices in the public sector to identify a list of possible crises types, and then to develop communication strategies for each type considering the affected stakeholders and the capabilities required.

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Appendix

- Interview Request Letter
- Interview Questions

Interview Request Letter

5 ابريل 2012

الاسم
الجهة

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته،

الموضوع: طلب المشاركة في دراسة بحثية لرسالة الماجستير

بدابة أود أن أتقدم إليكم بأطيب التحيات وأتمنى لكم دوام التوفيق والنجاح. فبالإشارة إلى الموضوع أعلاه، اسمي/ بدور علي، طالبة في الجامعة البريطانية بدبي، وأعمل حالياً على تحضير رسالة الماجستير بعنوان "إدارة الاتصال خلال الأزمات في القطاع الحكومي"، حيث سيتم خلال البحث مناقشة الموضوع من الناحية النظرية وذلك بدراسة المراجع الأكاديمية، بالإضافة إلى دراسة الواقع التطبيقي في القطاع الحكومي بدبي.

ومن منطلق المهام المخططه بجهتكم الموقرة، فإنني أود الاستفادة من الممارسات الموجودة حالياً لديكم، وذلك لإيماني بأن المعلومات القيمة من أرض الواقع لديكم ستضيف إلى البحث بعداً تطبيقياً، ما من شأنه سيكون مرجعاً أكاديمياً يمكن للطلاب والجهات الحكومية الاستفادة منه.

وتنقسم الدراسة البحثية إلى عدة أقسام تعنى بـ: تعريف الأزمات ومعايير تحديدها، إدارة الأزمات في القطاع الحكومي، دور الاتصال في إدارة الأزمات والعملية التنظيمية لذلك، عوامل نجاح إدارة الاتصال خلال الأزمات.

وعليه فإنني أتطلع لموافقتكم للمشاركة في هذا البحث، الذي سيساهم بتطوير نموذج لإدارة الاتصال خلال الأزمات، وذلك بتحديد موعد لمقابلتكم لمناقشة الأسئلة التفصيلية بشأن الإجراءات المتبعة لجهتكم الموقرة في إدارة الاتصال خلال الأزمات.

لمزيد من الاستفسارات وتحديد موعد المقابلة مع المعنيين من جهتكم الموقرة، يرجى التواصل معي على:
هاتف: 050-6547756،
أو البريد الإلكتروني: budoor.ali@gmail.com.

وتفضلوا بقبول جزيل الشكر والتقدير،

الطالبة/ بدور علي

المرفقات:

- رسالة من الجامعة تفيد بإعداد رسالة الماجستير
- الأسئلة الخاصة بالمقابلة

Interview Questions

I would like to thank you for your support by taking part in this research, which I am confident of its valuable outcome that would be an academic reference for your organization and research centers.

Personal Information:

- Position & Department:
- Organization Name:
- No of years in the current entity:
- No of years experience in crisis management:

Crisis Management

- What is your organizational strategy for crisis management?
- Which internal department handles crisis management?
- What are the criteria you have to identify a crisis in the public sector?
- What is the process or model you follow to manage a crisis?
- Who is the decision maker for crisis management decisions?

Crisis Communication Management

- What is the role of communication in managing crisis outcomes?
- What communication tools do you use during crises?
- What are your criteria to select the communication management team?
- Who are the members of crisis communication management team? Who is the leader?
- What are their roles and capabilities?
- Who is the official spokesperson(s) in your organization?
- What is the process you follow for crisis communication management?
- What are the criteria or attribute you have to decide using a specific crisis communication management approach?
- How did you effectively use communication to manage a recent crisis? Please provide a background of the crisis.
- How do you measure the effectiveness of communication strategy being used?

Crisis Communication Management during Joint Crises

- How do you cooperate with other entities in the case of a crisis affects more than one organization at the same time?
- How do you assign the crisis communication management team roles and responsibilities during joint crises?
- How are the spokespersons identified in such a joint crisis? Do you have a process to identify one main spokesperson?
- What communication strategy have you used for a recent joint crisis? And how effective was it?
- Do you recommend having unified model to be applied for the whole public sector for crisis communication management? Why?

Stakeholders' Role in Crisis Communication Management

- How to you categorize your stakeholders? (Internally and externally). Who are they?
- How often do you consult your stakeholders in strategic organizational decision making in the normal days?
- What is the role of your stakeholders in the crisis management plan?
- How do you position your stakeholders during a crisis?
- What is the positive role your stakeholders played in a significant crisis?
- How do you position the media in your crisis communication management?
- Have you ever approached the media and/or other stakeholders to assist you in managing crisis outcomes?
- Do you have any comment to add?