

A Thematic Analysis of Organizations' Crisis Response Strategies



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This study provides a thematic analysis and explores organizations' crisis response strategies using quantitative dimensions to identify complex patterns, trends, and relationships within journals. This paper explores organizations' crisis response strategies in light of the increasing number of crises worldwide. The studies have identified four thematic areas for the research study using co-citation analysis of existing crisis-related literature. The study synthesizes the data by identifying quality and quantity indicators in research utilizing "organizational strategic response to crisis." It employs "relational bibliometric techniques" to identify structural indications in organizational crisis response, such as analytical framework and developing research subjects.

Keywords: Crisis, Organizations, Crisis Response Strategies, Bibliometric Technique, Thematic Analysis

1. Introduction

The main reasons for the increasing pandemic threat in the 21st century are: a rapidly growing and mobile world population; urbanization trends and the concentration of people; industrialized food production in global value chains; increased consumption of higher-order foods including meat; and, the development of global transport networks acting as vectors in the spread of pathogens (Pongsiri et al., 2009; Labonte et al., 2011). Disease outbreaks such as SARS, Ebola, Marburg, hantavirus, Zika and avian influenza are all outcomes of anthropogenic impacts on ecosystem and biodiversity.

To manage crises effectively in the future, it is crucial to clearly understand a problem (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic) and the immediate response that follows. Using experiences during crises is essential to recognizing future challenges. Effective planning and implementation of strategies must be done to prepare for and mitigate the effects of future crises. It is also vital to understand the long-term implications of emergencies and how to prevent similar events from happening. Lastly, developing resilient systems that can adapt to changing circumstances is important. Examining the history of pandemics and epidemics is essential to identify patterns and similarities. This includes looking at how diseases spread, the responses to those diseases, and the long-term impacts of those diseases on society and economies. This information can inform strategies and policies for responding to future crises.

This thematic study addresses three research questions:

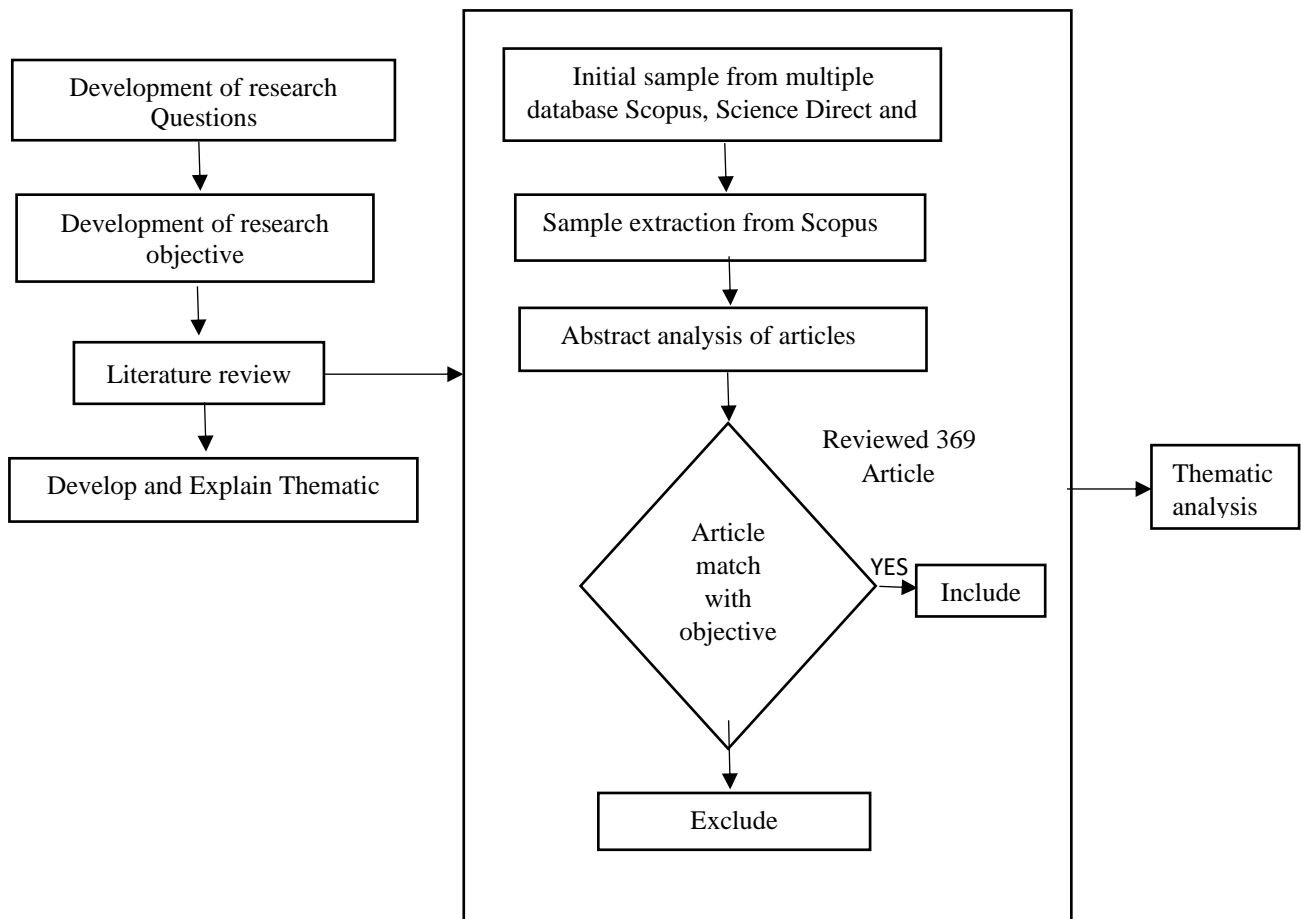
RQ1. What are the thematic areas that emerge from the crisis-related literature?

RQ2. What are the implications of this study?

We have identified four thematic areas using co-citation analysis to answer RQ1. Through RQ2, we find the Social Implication, theoretical implication, and Practical implication.

Situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) was developed by Timothy Coombs in 2007 to help organizations mitigate the impact of crises. Furthermore, it allows organizations to communicate and manage public perception and reputation (Coombs, 2007). It provides guidance on how organizations should respond to different types of crises based on the perceived threat and the level of responsibility they hold for the crisis. These can help repair the reputation and reduce negative behaviors and adverse impacts. SCCT involves establishing a theoretical relationship between crisis and crisis response strategies. SCCT's index of crisis response strategies is based on a perception of acceptance of responsibility. The SCCT divides crisis response strategies into primary and supplementary strategies (Coombs, 2007). In the primary crisis response strategy, organizations confront and deny the crisis. There are three main stages to a primary crisis response strategy: deny, diminish, and rebuild. Organizations that are in the denial stage are not prepared to accept that there is a crisis. In the diminished stage, organizations accept a crisis but minimize its impact and attempt to downplay it. In the rebuild stage, organizations focus on recovery, restoring trust, and strengthening their response. Bolstering is the supplementary organizations' strategic response to crisis. In these stages, the organization recalls past accomplishments and informs stakeholders that it is also suffering from the crisis.

2. Methodology



We follow PRISMA guidelines in this study for transparency (Liberati et al., 2009). Systematic, semi-systematic, and integrative approaches are three methods of literature review. A semi-systematic literature survey was used to identify the topic (Snyder, 2019). Research papers available online in English are considered for this thematic study. "Organizational response to crisis", "Organizational strategies to crisis", and various synonyms were the main keywords used in this literature review. Due to their high influence in their areas of study, only empirical and review-based papers have been synthesized to understand the study better (Anand et al., 2020).

An Organization's crisis response strategy can be defined as proposing and executing plans during crisis and post-crisis (Coombs, 2008). The Thematic analysis is performed by extracting 369 research documents in CSV form from the Scopus database. The retrieved data from Scopus analyzed using R Software and VosViewer ranges from 1983 to July 2023. Over the past four decades, from 1983 to 2023, an extensive and diverse body of knowledge has been built up on the subject, supported by many reputable sources (Coombs, 1995). 246 journals and 363 documents have contributed to this wealth of information, showcasing an impressive annual growth rate of 7.42%, a testament to the ongoing interest and research in the field. On average, these documents have been published for 7.78 years, highlighting the enduring relevance of the research conducted. Furthermore, the quality and impact of these publications are evident, with an average of 22.7 citations per document, illustrating the significance of the findings to the broader scholarly community. The rich tapestry of knowledge is further enhanced by a staggering 18,650 references, underscoring the interconnectedness and depth of research within the subject domain.

3. Thematic Analysis

The theme analysis is separated into four thematic areas based on centrality and density. The X and Y axes are divided into four quadrants, symbolizing the degree of development and importance shown by density and centrality. According to density location and centrality on the X-axis and Y-axis, the thematic areas can be classified as Basic theme area, Motor thematic area, Niche thematic area, and Emerging or declining thematic area. These themes can be categorized on the basis of density and centrality on which Thematic areas are created.

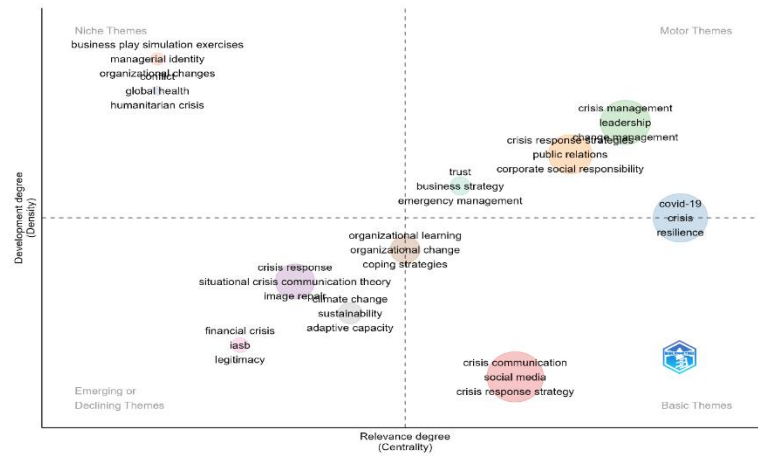


Figure 2 Thematic Areas

Table 2 Thematic Areas

Theme Area	Centrality (X-axis)	Density (Y-Axis)
Basic Theme	High	Low
Motor Theme	High	High
Niche Theme	Low	High
Emerging or declining Theme	Low	Low

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1 Thematic Area 1: Basic Theme

The Basic thematic cluster exhibits a high density along the X-axis, suggesting that the topics within this cluster hold a significant degree of centrality and relevance to the overall research focus. However, the density is relatively low along the Y-axis, implying that these topics may require further development to gain a more comprehensive understanding. Despite their current state of development, the keywords found in this cluster, including Crisis communication, Social media, crisis response strategy, Crisis, and Resilience, are undeniably relevant to the research at hand. They represent critical crisis management and communication aspects, indicating their potential to yield valuable insights.

4.2 Thematic Area 2: Motor Theme

The Motor thematic cluster, characterized by its high density along the X-axis, holds immense centrality and significance, making it a crucial aspect for companies to consider when developing crisis communication strategies. Leveraging social media is vital to reach their target audience and manage potential crises effectively. Moreover, the cluster's well-developed topics, signified by its high position on the Y-axis, indicate its integral role in the research field, suggesting a need for further in-depth exploration. Researchers should focus on probing the topics within this cluster to understand this domain comprehensively. Building on the keywords and topics within the Motor thematic cluster in future research studies can provide valuable insights. Key areas of interest may include:

- Investigating successful crisis management strategies employed by organizations,
- Exploring best practices for handling crises across various industries, and
- Analysing the role of leadership in crisis management and its effectiveness in navigating critical situations.

4.3 Thematic Area 3: Niche Theme

The niche theme cluster, characterized by its low centrality towards the X-axis and high density along the Y-axis presents a unique and intriguing landscape of highly developed topics, albeit relevant to specific areas. This distinctive configuration indicates that the topics within this cluster possess a well-defined purpose and niche appeal, catering to a particular audience or domain. While this may limit their widespread relevance, it also points towards the potential for further growth and expansion within this specialized sphere.

The cluster's focused and well-developed nature suggests that these topics can gain popularity and broader recognition with the right approach. To achieve this, increasing accessibility is crucial. It calls for strategies that enhance visibility and promote active discussions around the subjects.

4.4 Thematic Area 4: Emerging or Declining Theme

The thematic area exhibits low centrality along the X-axis and low density along the Y-axis. These indicators suggest that the theme is either emerging or declining, pointing to its underdeveloped nature and narrow scope within the current body of research. Despite these initial observations, it is crucial to recognize that this thematic area possesses substantial potential for future research study. We can gain valuable insights into critical issues that affect our global landscape by examining the

keywords associated with this theme, such as crisis response, situational crisis theory, image repair, climate change, sustainability, adaptive capacity, and financial crisis.

5. Conclusion

This review study uses a thematic analysis to organize the fragmented literature on organization's strategies in response to crisis and provide a structure for future research. The Key findings of this study are discussed in following sub-sections.

We addressed RQ1 that is intended to highlight the thematic areas found from the literature available in Scopus database. The literature was clustered using co-citation analysis using R software. The study's analysis of thematic clusters in crisis management and communication revealed four distinct categories: Basic Themes, Motor Themes, Niche Theme, and Emerging or Declining Theme. The basic Theme is Positioned centrally along the X-axis. This cluster's relevance to the research focus is evident. However, its density along the Y-axis suggests room for expansion.

Keywords such as Crisis communication, Social media, crisis response strategy, Crisis, and Resilience highlight their significance in crisis management. This cluster calls for further investigation into crisis communication best practices, the evolving role of social media, and a comprehensive understanding of crisis response strategies. Motor Theme holds paramount importance in crisis communication strategies.

Topics such as successful crisis management strategies, leadership's role, public relations, and corporate social responsibility dominate this cluster. Future research can delve into effective processes, leadership's impact, and the synergy between different disciplines in crisis management. These insights empower organizations to enhance their crisis response plans and safeguard their reputation. The Niche Theme boasts well-developed topics with dense representation along the Y-axis, catering to specific areas. It holds relevance for businesses and organizations with specialized focuses. The insights here can guide targeted marketing, provide technical knowledge, and influence academia and policymaking within these niche markets. While its appeal may be limited, strategic efforts can broaden its accessibility and influence. Emerging or Declining Theme suggests either emerging or declining importance.

Theoretical Implications

The study has theoretical implications. Thematic areas identified in this study can highlight the evolution of crisis management as an area of study. There is a need for crisis management research to integrate concepts from related fields, such as corporate social responsibility, public relations, leadership theory, climate change, sustainability, and financial challenges (D'Aveni & Macmillan, 1990). This integration can create a more comprehensive view of crisis management and provide insights into how organizations can effectively respond to and manage crises. Theoretical exploration of situational crisis theory and image repair can contribute to developing a robust theoretical framework, which can help organizations develop more effective crisis communication and image reputation strategies post-crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2002; Thiessen & Ingenhoff, 2011). This can help organizations develop strategies and tactics to prevent or mitigate crises efficiently and effectively.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study have practical implications for various stakeholders. Organizations can leverage insights from the Motor Themes cluster to refine their crisis response strategies, understand leadership's role, and uphold their reputation during crises. Businesses with specialized focuses can tailor their marketing efforts using Niche Theme insights, effectively catering to specific audiences. Furthermore, researchers and policymakers can prioritize the Emerging or Declining Theme cluster to address pressing issues like climate change, adaptive capacity, and financial resilience, thus contributing to informed decision-making and practical solutions. This may result in more effective resource allocation, improved stakeholder participation, and improved response to market changes. Ultimately, this can result in tremendous business success, sustainability, and more significant societal progress. This may affect The entire economy since it might start a positive feedback loop of success. Businesses may profit from resource optimization's numerous advantages and forge a better future for themselves and society with the correct strategies in place. An organization's crisis response strategy can affect its stakeholders (Guzzo et al., 2021). These crisis response strategies may affect emotions, social norms, organizational trust and employee's attitude towards organizations (Bundy et al., 2017; Harvey & Haines, 2005; Koronis & Ponis, 2018)

Future Study

The study opens avenues for future research into crisis management and communication. Investigating the underdeveloped clusters, particularly the Emerging or Declining Themes, presents opportunities to delve deeper into critical issues such as climate change adaptation and financial resilience. Exploring the interplay between Motor Themes and Niche Themes can provide insights into cross-disciplinary strategies for crisis management. Additionally, longitudinal studies could track the evolution of thematic clusters over time, gauging shifts in crisis communication trends and practices. This research could inform the development of best practices for responding to events and emergencies in both the private and public sectors. By combining this data with other sources, such as event-level and individual-level data, practitioners could gain deeper insights into anticipating and managing crises. This could enable organizations to design more tailored and effective responses to crises. Moreover, it could help to develop more robust strategies for preventing and responding to crisis in the future. This type of data-driven analysis and planning could help organizations be more prepared for crises and reduce the severity of their impacts. It could also foster a culture of safety and resilience in organizations

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