



Rethinking Public Relations in Crisis Management and Employee Engagement in the Nigerian Shippers' Council

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Abstract. Organisations and businesses face complex challenges in their daily operations, both intrapersonal and interpersonal, which can impact their effectiveness, reputation, and employee job satisfaction. Ineffective crisis management may lead to low morale, decreased productivity, and increased turnover rates. This study examines the relationship between public relations tools, crisis management, and employee job satisfaction in the Nigerian Shippers' Council. This study is based on Stakeholder Theory and employs a correlational survey research design. A purposive sampling technique was used, with total enumeration yielding 433 respondents. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings indicate that 98.3% of respondents preferred WhatsApp group communication due to its interactive and inclusive nature. Furthermore, press releases and media briefings were minimally used during crises, with 80% and 76.8% of respondents, respectively, stating they were only occasionally employed. The study highlights the importance of digital communication platforms, particularly WhatsApp groups and online surveys, in enhancing real-time engagement with employees and stakeholders. It is recommended that the Nigerian Shippers' Council prioritize these tools to improve crisis management strategies and boost employee job satisfaction.

Keywords: Public Relations; Crisis Management; Employees Job Satisfaction; Nigerian Shippers Council; Tools

1. Introduction

Crises are inevitable occurrences in organizational settings, affecting individuals, groups, and entire institutions. A crisis is defined as any event or period that leads or may lead to an unstable and dangerous situation impacting an individual, group, or society (Hinsberg & Lamanna, 2024). In the workplace, crises can emerge from various sources, including individual employee misconduct, workplace violence, operational failures, or external disruptions. Employee misconduct, for instance, occurs when an individual associated with an organization engages in unethical or illegal behavior, which can damage both personal and corporate reputations (Kowaleski et al., 2024; Kunapalan & Visvanathan, 2020; Mayer et al., 2010; Werbel & Balkin, 2010). Such crises demand strategic intervention, particularly through crisis management and public relations (PR) efforts, to mitigate reputational damage and restore organizational stability.

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Public relations tools play a critical role in managing crises and maintaining stakeholder trust. According to Adjin-Tettey et al. (2020), PR serves as a management function that assesses public attitudes, aligns organizational policies with public interest, and executes communication strategies to gain public understanding and acceptance. PR strategies not only help communicate an organization's policies and challenges but also provide feedback mechanisms that enhance mutual understanding between organizations and their stakeholders (Beresford & Schwarz, 2014; Lee et al., 2023; Ulmer et al., 2007; Walters, 2008). Crisis management, as a subset of PR, focuses on preparing for, responding to, and recovering from crises to protect an organization's reputation and ensure continuity (Coombs, 2019). Research suggests that organizations with robust crisis management strategies report higher employee job satisfaction and lower turnover rates, contributing to long-term sustainability (Gazi et al., 2024).

While existing literature extensively explores crisis management and public relations strategies, there remains a limited understanding of their direct impact on employee job satisfaction, particularly in the context of public sector organizations in developing economies. Previous studies have largely focused on private sector crisis management and its effect on corporate reputation, overlooking its implications for employee morale and productivity in government agencies. Furthermore, empirical studies on the Nigerian Shippers' Council's approach to crisis management and employee job satisfaction are scarce (Adepoju, 2024; Ndikom et al., 2017; Uche et al., 2017). This research gap necessitates an investigation into how crisis management strategies and PR tools influence employee satisfaction in this regulatory body.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to crisis communication and employee management literature, particularly within public institutions. Understanding how PR tools and crisis management strategies affect employee satisfaction can inform better policymaking and organizational strategies. Given that employee job satisfaction is closely linked to productivity, retention, and overall organizational performance, this study offers insights that can enhance workplace stability and stakeholder engagement in government agencies.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between public relations tools, crisis management, and employee job satisfaction in the Nigerian Shippers' Council. By analyzing employee preferences for communication tools during crises and assessing the effectiveness of PR interventions, this study seeks to provide evidence-based recommendations for improving crisis response strategies and fostering a more satisfied and engaged workforce.

Despite existing studies on crisis management and PR strategies, research on their direct influence on employee job satisfaction remains limited (Adelia et al., 2024; Robby Wahyudi et al., 2024). Previous research has primarily focused on private sector crisis communication, neglecting the unique challenges faced by government agencies, where bureaucratic processes, regulatory constraints, and stakeholder expectations may impact crisis response effectiveness (Beebe, 2004; Copley, 2020; Formentin & Spaulding, 2022). Additionally, while organizations employ various PR tools such as press releases, media briefings, and digital communication platforms, their actual usage and effectiveness in crisis management within the Nigerian Shippers' Council remain unclear.

Furthermore, employee job satisfaction is a critical factor in organizational performance, yet there is insufficient empirical evidence on how crisis management strategies influence employee perceptions, engagement, and overall job satisfaction within public institutions. The lack of structured crisis management frameworks and



inconsistent application of PR tools may further widen the gap between employee expectations and organizational response strategies, leading to dissatisfaction and disengagement.

Given these gaps, this study seeks to examine the relationship between public relations tools, crisis management strategies, and employee job satisfaction in the Nigerian Shippers' Council. By assessing employee communication preferences during crises and evaluating the effectiveness of PR interventions, this research aims to provide actionable recommendations for enhancing crisis response strategies and improving employee satisfaction.

2. Methods

The study adopted a correlational survey research design. The population of the study included all staff members of the Nigerian Shippers' Council (NSC). There are 433 employees in the NSC, with 254 employees based at the Lagos head office and 179 employees working in zonal coordinating/area offices. The study utilized a purposive sampling technique with the Total Enumeration sampling method. The research instrument used was a questionnaire, and data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Table 1 Public Relations Tools Deployed by the Nigerian Shippers' Council for Crisis Management

No	Items	Adopted (%)	Not Adopted (%)	Remarks
1	Town Hall Meetings	92.3 (n = 369)	7.8 (n = 31)	Adopted
2	WhatsApp Group Communication	98.3 (n = 393)	1.8 (n = 7)	Adopted
3	Suggestion Box	1.5 (n = 6)	98.5 (n = 394)	Not Adopted
4	Press Conference	1.3 (n = 5)	98.8 (n = 395)	Not Adopted
5	Press Release	17.5 (n = 70)	82.5 (n = 330)	Not Adopted
6	Staff Newsletter	93.5 (n = 374)	6.5 (n = 26)	Adopted
7	Training & Capacity-Building Workshops	85.8 (n = 343)	14.3 (n = 57)	Adopted
8	Staff Recognition Programmes	95.3 (n = 381)	4.8 (n = 19)	Adopted
9	Employee Feedback Mechanisms	93.8 (n = 375)	6.3 (n = 25)	Adopted
10	Stakeholder Forums	61.5 (n = 246)	38.5 (n = 154)	Adopted
11	Events and Trade Exhibitions	17.8 (n = 71)	82.3 (n = 329)	Not Adopted

The analysis of public relations tools deployed by the Nigerian Shippers' Council for crisis management reveals varying levels of adoption. Among the 11 tools evaluated, seven were predominantly adopted, while four were largely underutilized.

Among the adopted tools, WhatsApp group communication had the highest adoption rate (98.3%, n = 393), followed by staff recognition programs (95.3%, n = 381). Other widely adopted tools included employee feedback mechanisms (93.8%, n = 375), staff newsletters (93.5%, n = 374), town hall meetings (92.3%, n = 369), training and capacity-building workshops (85.8%, n = 343), and stakeholder forums (61.5%, n = 246). These results indicate the organization's emphasis on direct communication, employee engagement, and capacity development as part of its crisis management strategy.

Conversely, several tools were minimally utilized or not adopted at all. For instance, suggestion boxes (1.5%, n = 6), press conferences (1.3%, n = 5), press releases (17.5%, n = 70), and events and trade exhibitions (17.8%, n = 71) were adopted at less than 20%,



suggesting a limited reliance on external communication and public-facing crisis management strategies.

Table 2 Extent of Public Relations Tools Deployment in Crisis Management at the Nigerian Shippers' Council

Items	HD (%)	MD (%)	NSD (%)	NAA (%)	M	S.D	Remarks
Press releases are frequently used to address crises.	0 (0)	320 (80)	27 (6.8)	53 (13.3)	2.6	0.7	Minimally Deployed
Media briefings are organized regularly to manage crises.	0 (0)	307 (76.8)	86 (21.5)	7 (1.8)	2.7	0.4	Minimally Deployed
Social media platforms are actively used during crises.	0 (0)	8 (2.0)	194 (48.5)	198 (49.5)	1.5	0.5	Not So Deployed
Stakeholder engagement meetings are often held during crises.	0 (0)	0 (0)	163 (40.8)	237 (59.3)	1.4	0.5	Not At All Deployed
Newsletters or official statements are consistently issued during crises.	0 (0)	52 (13.0)	211 (52.8)	137 (34.3)	1.7	0.6	Not So Deployed
Public service announcements (radio/TV) are commonly used during crises.	0 (0)	0 (0)	337 (84.3)	63 (15.8)	1.8	0.3	Not So Deployed
Websites or online platforms are regularly updated with crisis information.	0 (0)	311 (77.8)	70 (17.5)	19 (4.8)	2.7	0.5	Minimally Deployed
Spokespersons are frequently deployed during crises.	181 (45.3)	203 (50.8)	16 (4.0)	0 (0)	3.4	0.5	Moderately Deployed
Surveys or feedback tools are often employed to gauge public opinion during crises.	0 (0)	230 (57.5)	113 (28.3)	57 (14.3)	2.4	0.7	Not So Deployed
Community engagement programs are initiated as part of crisis management efforts.	0 (0)	0 (0)	349 (87.3)	51 (12.8)	1.8	0.3	Not So Deployed

The analysis reveals inconsistent deployment of public relations tools in crisis management at the Nigerian Shippers' Council. Press releases were minimally deployed, with 80% of respondents indicating their infrequent use ($M = 2.67$). Similarly, media briefings were not widely used, with 76.8% of respondents stating they were minimally deployed ($M = 2.75$). Social media platforms were largely underutilized, with 48.5% of respondents indicating 'Not So Deployed' and 49.5% stating 'Not At All Deployed' ($M = 1.53$). Likewise, stakeholder engagement meetings were not conducted, as 59.3% of respondents reported 'Not At All Deployed' ($M = 1.41$). While spokespersons were the most utilized tool ($M = 3.41$), other strategies, such as surveys and community engagement programs, were rarely used. These findings suggest that the Council primarily relies on internal communication rather than public outreach strategies during crises.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Preferred Communication and Engagement Strategies



The findings revealed that the majority of respondents preferred communication and engagement strategies that are interactive, inclusive, and employee-centered. Among these, WhatsApp Group Communication emerged as the most favored method, with 98.3% of respondents adopting this strategy. This suggests that instant, group-based communication platforms are highly effective in engaging staff and facilitating real-time updates.

Additionally, Staff Newsletters were widely adopted by 93.5% of respondents, indicating their significance in keeping employees informed about organizational matters. The Employee Feedback Mechanism was also highly favored, with 93.8% of respondents supporting its use. This highlights the importance of providing employees with a platform to share their views and contribute to decision-making processes.

Other preferred strategies included Staff Recognition Programs (95.3%) and Town Hall Meetings (92.3%), both of which are seen as effective in motivating employees and promoting open communication between staff and management. Additionally, Training and Capacity-Building Workshops (85.8%) had a significant adoption rate, reflecting the organization’s emphasis on professional development and skill enhancement. Lastly, Stakeholder Forums (61.5%) were adopted, indicating that while not as widely favored as other strategies, this method is still considered valuable for engaging both internal and external stakeholders.

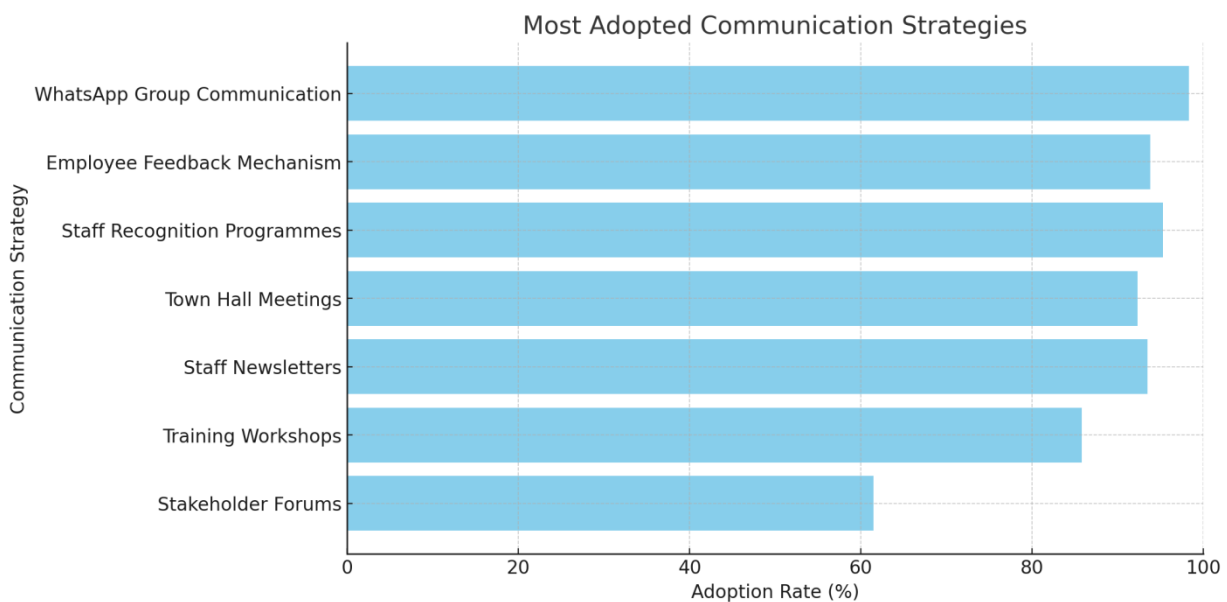


Figure 1 Most adopted communication strategies by the Nigerian Shippers' Council.

Figure 1 illustrates that the most widely adopted communication strategies by the Nigerian Shippers’ Council (NSC) are those that emphasize real-time interaction, inclusivity, and employee engagement. The highest adoption rate is observed for WhatsApp Group Communication (98.3%), indicating the preference for instant messaging platforms that facilitate quick updates and discussions among employees. Similarly, Staff Recognition Programmes (95.3%) and Employee Feedback Mechanisms (93.8%) were also highly favored, reflecting the organization’s focus on fostering motivation and ensuring employees have a platform to voice their opinions. Additionally, Town Hall Meetings (92.3%) and Staff Newsletters (93.5%) were widely used,



emphasizing the importance of structured yet open communication between management and employees. These strategies suggest that an organization functions more effectively when it encourages participation and provides regular updates on organizational matters.

Another key finding from the diagram is the significant adoption of Training & Capacity Building Workshops (85.8%), which highlights the organization's focus on continuous learning and professional growth. This suggests that the NSC prioritizes upskilling its workforce to improve efficiency and performance. Additionally, Stakeholder Forums (61.5%) were moderately adopted, signifying that while external engagement is valued, it is not as heavily prioritized as internal communication tools. This may indicate that stakeholder collaboration occurs but is not the primary method for crisis communication within the organization. The adoption trends reveal a strategic preference for direct employee interaction over broader public-facing communication, which aligns with the goal of fostering a well-informed and engaged workforce.

The diagram also highlights the low adoption of traditional communication tools, such as Press Conferences (1.3%), Suggestion Boxes (1.5%), Press Releases (17.5%), and Events and Trade Exhibitions (17.8%). These findings suggest that formal, one-way communication methods are seen as less effective in addressing internal engagement and crisis management needs. Employees appear to prefer more dynamic and interactive approaches that allow real-time participation and feedback, rather than passive information-sharing methods. The limited use of public relations tools like press releases and trade exhibitions further indicates that the NSC prioritizes internal communication over external visibility when dealing with crises. This shift reflects broader organizational trends where digital and interactive engagement tools are replacing traditional hierarchical communication structures.

3.2. Minimally Utilized or Rejected Strategies

Despite the recognized importance of effective communication in crisis management, certain traditional strategies were minimally utilized or outright rejected by respondents. The Suggestion Box, for example, was disregarded by 98.5% of respondents, suggesting that employees perceive it as outdated, slow, and ineffective in capturing real-time feedback. This aligns with findings by Milliken et al. (2003), who argue that traditional feedback mechanisms often fail because employees fear retaliation or believe their suggestions will be ignored. In contrast, modern organizations are shifting toward digital feedback systems, such as employee surveys and real-time chat platforms, which provide a more immediate and structured way to collect feedback.

Another largely rejected strategy was the Press Conference, with 98.8% of respondents indicating that it was not an effective internal communication tool. Press conferences are typically used for external stakeholder engagement, media relations, or corporate announcements rather than for addressing internal concerns. According to Coombs (2019), organizations often use press conferences as part of their crisis response strategy to manage public perception. However, for internal communication, they may be seen as formal, rigid, and lacking interactivity, making them less appealing for engaging employees. Instead, internal town hall meetings and virtual communication tools have gained popularity due to their two-way communication nature.

Events and Trade Exhibitions were also not widely adopted, with 82.3% of respondents dismissing their relevance in internal communication. While exhibitions and corporate events are valuable for brand visibility and stakeholder networking, they are not designed for day-to-day employee communication (Fill & Turnbull, 2019). This may



explain why respondents found them impractical for internal engagement. Instead, organizations are increasingly relying on digital engagement strategies, such as webinars, online training sessions, and interactive virtual forums, which allow employees to participate without the logistical constraints of physical events.

Similarly, Press Releases were not widely adopted, with 82.5% of respondents indicating their lack of relevance for internal communication. Traditionally, press releases have been a one-way communication tool used to distribute official statements to the media and the public (Formentin & Spaulding, 2022; Ljajić, 2023). However, employees today prefer more interactive and direct communication methods, such as emails, newsletters, or instant messaging platforms. The preference for internal newsletters and digital communication tools over press releases highlights a shift toward engagement-driven corporate communication, where employees expect a dialogue rather than a top-down information flow.

The rejection of these strategies underscores the growing importance of digital and participatory communication approaches in modern organizations. According to Neill (2017), employees are more engaged when organizations prioritize dialogue-driven communication methods, such as chat groups, internal social media, and interactive meetings, over traditional top-down communication. The increasing reliance on real-time communication tools, such as WhatsApp group discussions and internal feedback mechanisms, suggests that organizations need to move away from static communication tools and adopt flexible, employee-centered approaches that allow for immediate interaction (Cheung et al., 2020).

The findings indicate a clear shift in how organizations engage their employees during crises. While formal communication tools such as press releases and conferences still hold value in public relations and media engagement, they are largely ineffective for internal communication. Companies that fail to adapt to the changing preferences of their employees risk communication breakdowns, reduced engagement, and inefficiency in crisis response (Corral et al., 2022). To remain effective, organizations must continue to embrace interactive, technology-driven communication strategies that foster transparency, inclusivity, and real-time collaboration among employees.

3.3. Deployment of Communication Strategies During Crises

Crisis communication is a fundamental aspect of organizational resilience, yet the findings indicate that most communication strategies were minimally deployed during crises. Press releases and media briefings, which are typically key tools for managing public perception during emergencies, were reported as being infrequently used, with 80% and 76.8% of respondents respectively stating that they were only occasionally deployed. This low utilization rate suggests a reluctance to rely on traditional media channels during crises. According to Coombs (2010), organizations should leverage media briefings and press releases to maintain transparency and provide accurate information in crisis situations. However, if these tools are not utilized effectively, misinformation and speculation can fill the void, potentially damaging the organization's reputation.

The sporadic use of digital platforms further highlights the communication gaps during crises. The findings show that 77.8% of respondents indicated that websites and online platforms were minimally updated during crisis situations. In an era where digital communication plays a crucial role in information dissemination, this finding suggests a missed opportunity to leverage technology for real-time updates. Research by Jin et al. (2014) emphasizes that timely updates on official websites and digital platforms can help



manage crises more effectively by reducing uncertainty and maintaining stakeholder trust. The underutilization of these platforms suggests that organizations may lack structured crisis communication plans or sufficient resources to manage digital updates efficiently during emergencies.

Social media, which has been widely recognized as a crucial tool for crisis communication, was also found to be insufficiently used, with only 48.5% of respondents indicating that it was effectively deployed. Studies by Maresh-Fuehrer and Smith (2016) show that social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn allow organizations to disseminate information rapidly and engage with stakeholders in real-time. The low utilization rate of social media suggests that many organizations do not have a structured crisis social media strategy or lack trained personnel to manage it effectively. Additionally, public service announcements (PSAs) via radio and television were reported to be underutilized, with 84.3% of respondents stating that these tools were insufficiently used. PSAs are traditionally effective in reaching large audiences during crises, particularly in situations where internet access may be limited (Alhabash et al., 2022; Ftanou et al., 2017). The low adoption rate of PSAs may indicate an overreliance on digital communication, potentially neglecting segments of the population that rely on traditional media.

One of the most concerning findings was the lack of active stakeholder and community engagement. The majority of respondents indicated that stakeholder engagement meetings and community outreach programs were either 'not at all deployed' or 'not so deployed' during crises. This highlights a significant gap in crisis management efforts. According to Heath and O'Hair (2020), engaging stakeholders during crises is essential for building trust, maintaining transparency, and ensuring coordinated responses. When organizations fail to communicate with stakeholders effectively, they risk exacerbating confusion and dissatisfaction among employees, customers, and the broader community. The lack of active engagement suggests that organizations may prioritize internal crisis management over external communication, which can hinder overall recovery efforts.

The minimal deployment of communication strategies during crises underscores the need for more proactive and structured crisis communication frameworks. The findings suggest that many organizations lack comprehensive crisis communication plans, leading to inconsistent and ineffective messaging. Research by Reynolds and Seeger (2005) emphasizes the importance of a well-defined crisis communication strategy that includes pre-crisis planning, real-time communication, and post-crisis evaluation. Organizations that fail to deploy effective communication strategies risk damaging their credibility, reducing stakeholder confidence, and prolonging the negative impacts of a crisis.

To enhance crisis communication effectiveness, organizations should adopt a multi-channel communication approach that integrates traditional media, digital platforms, social media, and stakeholder engagement efforts. Firstly, structured crisis communication plans should be developed, ensuring that press releases, media briefings, and public service announcements are utilized appropriately. Secondly, organizations should invest in digital crisis communication teams responsible for managing real-time updates on websites, social media, and other online platforms. Thirdly, stakeholder and community engagement must be prioritized to ensure that all affected parties are kept informed and involved in crisis response efforts. By implementing these strategies, organizations can build resilience, improve response coordination, and minimize the negative impacts of crises (Coombs & Tachkova, 2024; Urick, 2014).



4. Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal a strong preference for interactive, inclusive, and employee-centered communication strategies at the Nigerian Shippers Council. Methods such as WhatsApp Group Communication (98.3%), Staff Newsletters (93.5%), and Employee Feedback Mechanisms (93.8%) were widely adopted due to their effectiveness in fostering real-time updates, active participation, and open communication among employees. Other strategies, including Staff Recognition Programs (95.3%), Town Hall Meetings (92.3%), and Training Workshops (85.8%), were also valued for enhancing employee engagement and professional development. However, traditional communication methods like Suggestion Boxes (98.5%), Press Conferences (98.8%), and Press Releases (82.5%) were largely rejected or underutilized, indicating a shift away from formal, one-way communication towards more interactive and digital approaches.

The discussion of the findings highlights that communication strategies during crises were minimally deployed, which could significantly impact organizational resilience and stakeholder confidence. Press releases (80%), media briefings (76.8%), and online platforms (77.8%) were infrequently used, suggesting an ineffective approach to crisis communication. Additionally, social media (48.5%) and public service announcements (84.3%) were underutilized, reflecting a gap in leveraging digital platforms for crisis management. More critically, stakeholder and community engagement efforts were notably absent, demonstrating a lack of structured outreach and crisis response mechanisms. This underscores the necessity for a comprehensive, multi-channel crisis communication framework to ensure timely, transparent, and effective dissemination of information during emergencies.

Despite these insights, the study has some limitations. First, the research is limited to the Nigerian Shippers Council, and the findings may not be entirely generalizable to other organizations or industries with different communication cultures. Additionally, the study primarily relied on survey responses, which may not fully capture the qualitative aspects of employees' communication experiences. Future research should consider expanding the scope to include multiple organizations across different sectors, incorporating qualitative interviews to gain deeper insights into employees' perceptions. Moreover, an exploration of AI-driven communication strategies and their potential role in enhancing real-time engagement and crisis management could offer valuable recommendations for improving corporate communication in dynamic environments.

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