INTERNAL CRISIS COMMUNICATION: THE EFFECTS OF NEGATIVE EMPLOYEE-ORGANIZATION RELATIONSHIPS AND NEGATIVE EMOTIONS ON REPUTATION AND EMPLOYEES' UNSUPPORTIVE BEHAVIOR

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by

JAMES NDONE

Dr. Glen T. Cameron, Dissertation Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

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presented by James Ndone,

a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

Dr. Glen Cameron

Dr. Margaret Duffy

Dr. Ben Warner

Dr. Sungkyoung Lee

Dr. Monique Luisi

DEDICATION

To Adelaide Kavengi Ndone (1948-2011). My best friend, my counselor, and mom. Without your counsel and guidance, pursuing higher education, let alone this dissertation, would not have been possible. Continue resting in power knowing that your son made it. I dearly miss you mama.

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James Ndone

Dr. Glen T. Cameron, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

This study examines the role that negative employee-organization relationships (NEORs) play in determining crisis outcomes (organization's internal reputation and employees' unsupportive behavior). Moreover, the study aims to determine whether the timing of the communication message and the response strategies used in the message affect crisis outcomes. Finally, the role of negative emotions is investigated as mediating variables to explain the relationship between NEORs, crisis response strategies, and crisis timing strategies on crisis outcomes.

This study employed an online experiment with 2 (crisis response strategy: rebuilding vs. defensive) x 2 (timing: stealing thunder vs. thunder) between-subjects factorial design with a total of 465 participants recruited from Amazon's market research tool, MTurk. The findings indicate that NEORs affect internal reputation negatively and increase the likelihood of unsupportive behavior. Timing does not affect the relationship between NEORs and crisis outcomes. Rebuilding strategies help in overcoming employees' unwillingness to support the organization during a crisis. Lastly, negative emotions influenced the effect of NEORs on the crisis outcomes. Both theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Just like celebrities and politicians, organizations are in the public eye. This makes organizations prone to negative media coverage during a crisis which puts the organizations' reputations at risk. Furthermore, the relationships that an organization cultivates with its publics and how the organizations handle the crisis would have significant implications on various outcome variables including their reputations. The current study is designed to examine how internal publics respond to a crisis affecting the organization they work for. Specifically, this study will investigate how the effects of negative employee-organization relationships can be mediated by negative emotions and moderated by crisis response strategies and how that affects internal reputation and employees' unsupportive behavior during the crisis such as employees' unwillingness to take extra responsibility during a crisis. In general, a crisis occurs when the organization fails to meet its publics' needs or operates in ways that could put the publics' health, safety, or environment at risk.

Several scholars define what constitutes a crisis differently. For instance, Pearson and Clair (1998) define a crisis as "a low-probability, high-impact event that threatens the viability of the organization and is characterized by ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution, as well as by a belief that decisions must be made swiftly" (p. 60). Coombs (2007) defines a crisis as any sudden and unexpected event that disrupts the normal functions of an organization and puts both financial and reputational positions of the

organization in jeopardy. For a crisis to be deemed a crisis, the publics must perceive it like a crisis and if they do not, then there is no crisis (Coombs, 2007). Additionally, Fearn-Banks (2017) defines a crisis as any activity that disrupts the normal flow of business and can have minimal or extensive damage to the organization's reputations, profits, and business survival. All three definitions agree on one thing: a crisis is unpredictable and can jeopardize an organization's reputation. Organizational reputation refers to a general overview that the publics have over an organization (Grunig & Hung, 2002). It is the sum of the publics' assessments of how well an organization meets the publics' expectations based on past behaviors and relationships with the publics (Coombs, 2007).

Furthermore, Fearn-Banks (2017) defines a crisis as any activity that disrupts the normal flow of business and can cause minor to major damage to an organization's reputation, profits, and business survival. All three definitions agree on one thing: a crisis is unpredictable and can jeopardize an organization's reputation. The term "organizational reputation" refers to the general impression that the public has of a company (Grunig & Hung, 2002). It is the sum of the publics' assessments of how well an organization meets the publics' expectations based on past behaviors and relationships with the publics (Coombs, 2007).

This study will adopt Coombs's (2019) definition of a crisis. Coombs defines crisis as any perceived, unexpected, and unpredictable violation of salient publics expectations leading to negative feelings or disintegration of existing relationships between the organization and the publics (Coombs, 2019). This definition takes into

account two aspects. First, a crisis is a perception in that publics, have to recognize the crisis. Second, a crisis violates the expectations that the publics have on how an organization should carry out its duties. These expectations stem from the prevailing relationships between the organization and the publics. Some of these expectations include health, environment, and safety (Coombs, 2019). When these expectations are violated, publics become angry and the relationships between the organizations and the publics start to disintegrate.

Organizational crises cause high levels of uncertainty among the publics and organizations must act to manage this uncertainty. The need to know how to manage crises has made crisis communication researchers to investigate how to approach a crisis, how to communicate about a crisis, and when to communicate about the crisis. This has led to exponential growth in research in the crisis communication field, ranging from case studies to experimental research to help organizations understand the most effective ways to mitigate a crisis in what crisis communication scholars call crisis management (Coombs, 2019). Managing communication between the organization that is a crisis and its publics is a challenge. Crisis management involves setting forth strategies aimed at combating the crisis and minimizing its damage (Coombs, 2019). A crisis disrupts an organization's functions and can have long-term effects on the organizational reputation, performance, or even survival (Vercic et al., 2018). This communication is accomplished by gathering, analyzing, and sharing crisis information with the affected publics to help them cope with the crisis while also attempting to reduce reputational harm caused by a crisis (Coombs, 2019). Crisis communication has made researchers explore the crisis

message strategies that can help mitigate a crisis and how that impacts the industry by protecting the organizational reputation and fostering good post-crisis behavior among the publics (Claeys & Opgenhaffen, 2016; Heide & Simonsson, 2014; Kim et al., 2019).

Despite the exponential growth in crisis communication research, crisis communication scholars have raised concerns about the exclusive emphasis of external publics while ignoring other critical players in crisis: internal publics or employees. There has been limited crisis communication research involving employees and how they react to a crisis, despite their proximity to the organization (Frandsen & Johansen, 2011; Heide & Simonsson, 2014; Kim et al., 2019; Mazzei et al., 2012). This proximity to the organization makes employees the first receivers of a crisis. As internal publics, employees can act as representers of the organization to the external publics and by doing so, employees act as a reflection of how the organization is managed (Mishra et al., 2015). However, a few studies on sensemaking and "sensegiving" have made attempts to understand internal communication, but crisis communication from an internal perspective remains underexplored (Combe & Carrington, 2015; Fairhurst, 2011). The relationship between an organization and its employees influences how the employees act and speak, particularly during a crisis (Frandsen & Johansen, 2011). Therefore, there is a need for research in this area to understand how employees behave during a crisis. Such kind of scholarship is needed for crisis managers to know how to break crisis news to the employees, what to expect from the employees, and what the organization is doing to handle the crisis.

Employees, as internal publics, have a unique relationship with the organization. Employees are contractual publics with a legal relationship (economic agreement) with the organizations (Frandsen & Johansen, 2011). If the employee-organization relationships (EORs) are good, employees can give an organization a competitive edge as they possess a plethora of organizational knowledge and networks among them and the external publics which are instrumental to organizational success and crisis management (Bhatnagar, 2007; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 2000). A crisis creates uncertainty among employees as they also engage in cognitive reactions to the crisis out of stress, fear, and feelings of betrayal (Mazzei et al., 2012). This implies that crises induce certain emotions among publics. Thus, having good relationships with employees affects how employees evaluate crisis communication, help the employees manage emotions brought forth by the crisis, and work with senior management to send a unified positive message to the external publics. This unified voice is important during a crisis because employees significantly affect how external publics perceive an organization (Dahle & Wæraas, 2020). The organization-employee relationships make employees have unique expectations from the employer/organization by being both receivers and senders of information during a crisis, or by sharing their opinions about the crisis with their families, friends, and coworkers (Frandsen & Johansen, 2011; Kim et al., 2019; Koehler & Raithel, 2018). The way the employees talk about their organizations is determined by their relationships with the organizations.

The internal publics that will be used for this study are people who take surveys on a survey platform known as Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk is a branch of

Amazon that acts as a crowdsourcing marketplace where businesses and individuals can complete tasks virtually such as surveys, among other tasks. This population will be ideal as internal publics to maintain the ecological validity of the study and help reveal actual behaviors in a real-world setting. Also, the company has been grappling with issues of bots, where software programs perform repetitive tasks and therefore generating inaccurate survey responses. This is a good example of internal publics and an internal crisis.

To expand research in crisis communication, one study has looked at the impact of positive employee relationships and how that affects internal reputation and employees' supportive behavior (see Kim et al., 2019). From their study, the researchers found that good employee-organization relationships (EORs) help to restore internal reputation and fosters employee supportive behavior during a crisis. Their study explored supportive employee behaviors such as commitment, control mutuality, satisfaction, and trust. However, there is no empirical evidence accumulated to explain negative dimensions of organization-public relationships (NOPR) such as control dominance, distrust, dissatisfaction, and dissolution (Moon & Rhee, 2013). To fill the gap in the literature, this study explores the impact of negative organization-public relationships (NOPR) on internal reputation and employees' unsupportive behavior.

Another important aspect of crisis communication that has received researchers' attention is the role of timing of the crisis communication message. Timing refers to when an organization decides to release crisis information by admitting the presence of a crisis (Coombs, 2015). The timing of a crisis communication message helps in managing

a crisis effectively (Claeys et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2019). Prior research has explored two strategies —stealing thunder and thunder (Arpan & Pompper, 2003; Beldad et al., 2018). Organizations use the stealing thunder strategy when they decide to release the crisis information to the publics before third parties such as the media or consumer groups release the information (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). On the other hand, organizations use the thunder strategy when they wait for third parties to release the crisis information with the organization being left to respond to inquiries from the publics or the media (Arpan & Pompper, 2003). Although extensive research has been done on timing especially involving the external publics, the role of timing still lacks in an internal crisis communication perspective and therefore warrants more research.

In addition to the growth of research in crisis communication, several theories have been proposed to help researchers develop studies to test the efficacy of these theories. These theories can be applied in the industry to help crisis managers navigate a reputational crisis. One of the most dominant theories is the situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) which groups crises into three clusters and argues that crisis managers should tailor a crisis response to the type of crisis based on the level of attribution or crisis responsibility. (Coombs, 2007). Another theoretical framework is the integrated crisis mapping (ICM) model which explores the role of four dominant negative emotions during a crisis—fright, sadness, anger, and anxiety (Jin et al., 2010; 2012). SCCT has received extensive attention in crisis communication from an external perspective but not from an internal perspective. The ICM model has been understudied

in both external and internal crisis communication scholarship thus the two theoretical frameworks warrant research from an internal crisis perspective.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to address the gap in crisis communication literature by incorporating both SCCT and ICM model to explore how NOPR, crisis communication strategies, the timing of the response strategies, and negative emotions influence internal reputation and employees' unsupportive behavior. This will be done to investigate the moderated effects of negative employee-organization relationships on crisis outcomes of internal reputation and employees' unsupportive behavior. These variables will be tested using an experiment to evaluate the impact of crisis response strategies either apologizing for the crisis or denying the existence of the crisis. The experiment will also compare how the timing of the response strategies affects the way employees react to the crisis and how existing negative relationships (NEORs) influence employees' unsupportive behavior.

To test these variables, both Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique and hierarchical multiple regression will be used. A series of hierarchical multiple regression will be used to explore how the independent variables will affect the dependent variables while controlling for other effects. SEM is ideal for testing the variables above as there are some latent variables and observed variables that will be measured (Pituch & Stevens, 2016). For instance, a path analysis will be ideal for testing how negative emotions will mediate the effects of negative EOR, timing strategies, and crisis response strategies on internal reputation and unsupportive behavior (crisis outcomes). Therefore, theoretical constructs from both SCCT and ICM model will be measured using an SEM model with

relationships between the constructs being represented by regression or path coefficients between the factors. For instance, NEOR is a latent variable that will be measured using several observed variables such as control dominance, distrust, dissatisfaction, and dissolution. By conducting SEM, this study will be able to draw from crisis communication theories to establish the relationship between several variables. For example, extant literature from SCCT and ICM model suggests that there is a causal relationship between the mediating role of negative emotions on the effects of positive EOR and crisis response strategy and crisis timing strategies on supportive behavior and internal reputation (Kim et al., 2019). Therefore, this study will use SEM to explore the relationships between the negative EOR, crisis response strategies, negative emotions, and employees' unsupportive behavior such as negative megaphoning, or sharing negative information about the organization with outsiders.

This study is significant in several ways. First, it fills the gap on the call for more research involving internal publics. By doing so, the current study will contribute to the extant research in crisis communication and help gain insights on how to manage an internal crisis effectively, where employees are the internal publics. Second, the findings of the study will contribute to theoretical advancement and the practice of internal crisis communication. This will be achieved by synthesizing constructs from two theoretical frameworks which are key in building robust crisis communication theories (Coombs, 2013). Third, by focusing on timing, this study will add to the existing literature on thunder and stealing thunder in crisis communication by investigating how and when organizations should communicate with internal publics about a crisis. Lastly, by

integrating EOR in the extant crisis communication framework, this study could shed light on why some organizations fail to survive during a crisis due to negative organization-employee relationships that make such employees not engage in supportive behavior when their organization is in crisis.

In this chapter, I identified several gaps in crisis communication and why internal crisis communication warrants more research. I also proposed that there is a need for research to explore the effects of negative employee-organization relationships and how timing strategies and crisis response strategies could moderate the effects on crisis outcomes. Furthermore, I proposed that negative emotions could play a mediating role between NEOR, crisis response strategies, crisis timing strategies on both internal reputation and unsupportive behavior. I also talked about the role of internal publics in a crisis and identified how this study will contribute both theoretically and practically to the extant crisis communication literature. Moreover, I talked briefly about the methodological approach that this study will use to test the variables involved in internal crisis communication. This introduction establishes the context for the rest of the study. The following chapter is a literature review, in which I will examine the existing crisis communication literature.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary goal of this study is to examine how the effects of negative employee-organization relationships can be mediated by negative emotions and moderated by crisis response strategies, in turn, affecting internal reputation and employees' behavior. In this chapter, I will cover the extant literature in crisis communication that is relevant to this study. First, I will cover the two theoretical frameworks that will be the backbone of this study. Second, I will look at internal crisis communication, exploring internal reputation, and different communication behaviors that employees use. Then I will address the aspect of negative organization-employee relationships and how that affects employees' unwillingness to support the organization during a crisis.

Theoretical Frameworks

The growth of crisis communication research and related challenges have given birth to several theories that have guided scholarship in this area. Two theoretical frameworks will guide this research: situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) and the integrated crisis mapping (ICM) model. Crisis communication researchers argue that combining two or more theoretical frameworks helps in building robust crisis communication theories and studies (Coombs, 2015). Due to the limited research in internal crisis communication, this study will blend theoretical concepts from both SCCT and ICM model to understand how the two theoretical frameworks can be applied in internal crisis communication research. The two theories present two unique perspectives

when it comes to crisis communication. The SCCT provides situation-based crisis response strategies that serve as guidelines to help organizations respond to crises (Coombs, 2007; Jin et al., 2012). The ICM model, on the other hand, shapes crisis responses from an emotion-based standpoint as it seeks to understand the emotions that the victims of a crisis experience. Understanding the emotional states of the publics helps an organization in crisis to customize its crisis responses so that the organization can address the emotional needs of the publics. For instance, knowing that the publics are angry will determine which crisis response strategy to use to address the angry publics. Therefore, concepts from both the SCCT and the ICM model will be used together to provide a more robust approach to an internal crisis involving NEOR and negative emotions on both internal reputation and unsupportive behavior. The following section looks at these theoretical frameworks in depth.

Situational crisis communication theory. One of the most widely researched theories in crisis communication is the situational crisis communication theory (also known as SCCT). It was developed to help scholars and practitioners understand how a crisis can be addressed by focusing on reputational repair (Coombs, 2007). This is known as post-crisis communication, or "what crisis management says and does after a crisis" (Coombs, 2007, p. 169). To develop SCCT, Coombs used the attribution theory as a guide (Weiner, 1985, 86). The attribution theory postulates that people search for what triggered certain events (usually negative) and assign blame to those events (Weiner, 1986). When the publics make attributions about crisis responsibility, they tend to develop both affective and behavioral attitudes about the organization in crisis (Coombs

& Holladay, 2005). Therefore, SCCT was developed as a post-crisis framework to help organizations restore their reputations. The theory also helps crisis managers predict how the public will react to a crisis, which helps managers determine the best strategies to use to alleviate the crisis. According to SCCT, an organization's survival during and after a crisis is dependent on three factors: prior relationships with the public, attribution of crisis responsibility, and crisis response strategies that an organization employs to mitigate the effects of the crisis (Coombs, 2007).

Positive pre-crisis relationships with the publics are crucial in managing a crisis as it shows how an organization has built a favorable or unfavorable reputation prior to the crisis. This reputation is evinced in the form of reputational capital (Coombs, 2007). Reputational capital refers to the organization's "stock of perceptual and social assets" and the "quality of the relationship it has established with publics and the regard in which the company and brand are held" (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004, p. 32). Thus, over time, good relationships with the publics enable organizations to accumulate reputation capital and a favorable prior reputation functions as a "bank account containing reputation capital" (Coombs & Holladay, 2006, p. 123). Although this reputation capital is lost during a crisis, a favorable pre-crisis reputation acts as both a buffer and a shield, creating what crisis communication scholars call a halo effect (Coombs & Holladay, 2006; Kim, 2017). During a crisis, the organization still has some reputational capital to spend (Coombs, 2007). Therefore, a good prior reputation implies that an organization suffers less reputational damage during a crisis and can rebound fast. On the other hand, unfavorable pre-crisis reputation "acts like velcro and attracts additional reputational

damage during a crisis" (Coombs & Holladay, 2006, p. 126). In this case, a crisis functions as a confirmation of previously held attitudes that the organization cannot meet the publics' needs.

Crisis communication scholars have extensively studied the benefits of the halo effect. By definition, the halo effect is "the consequences that the general impression has on specific impressions" (Beckwith et al., 1978, p. 465). It is how the overall evaluation of an organization affects how publics' specific judgments about an organization (O'Donnell & Schultz, 2005). The halo effect gives an organization some level of immunity during a crisis and therefore functions as a buffer or a shield during a crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2004). For halo as a buffer, the publics tend to attribute the crisis to external factors that the organization could not control and therefore assign the organization less crisis responsibility (Fombrun, 1996). Weak crisis attributions lead to less reputational damage during a crisis. In the case of halo as a shield, there are several explanations to support this claim. First, human beings are misers of information and when presented with information that is incongruent with their preexisting beliefs, they are driven to change their attitudes and beliefs as the dissimilar information induces dissonance and psychological tension (Festinger, 1957). Therefore, people tend to focus on the big picture and ignore the fine details such as those brought by a crisis by selecting messages that reinforce their preexisting attitudes and avoiding conflicting information (selective exposure), interpreting messages by perceiving what they want to hear while ignoring conflicting information (selective perception), and choosing to remember messages that are consistent with their beliefs while discarding contradictory information

(selective retention) (Kim, 2017). Therefore, publics will tend to concentrate on the positive attributes of an organization, such as corporate social responsibility, and ignore any negative information to the extent of dismissing the crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2006).

The second concept that SCCT presents is the attribution of crisis responsibility. The theory categorizes crises into three groups based on the degree to which the organization bears responsibility for the crisis. There are three of them: victim, accidental, and preventable. The victim cluster is comprised of crises that the organization did not predict and could not have prevented them from happening. The organization plays a victim with the hope of inducing weak attributions of crisis responsibility. Consequently, this leads to mild reputational threat. For instance, a natural disaster like a hurricane, a false rumor about an organization, workplace violence involving former and current employee attacks, and product tampering such as the infamous 1982's Tylenol crisis or any other forms of malevolence (Coombs, 2007).

The accidental cluster includes crises in which the organization's actions that led to the crisis were unplanned, and thus the attribution of crisis responsibility is mild. This results in moderate reputational damage. Examples in this category include technical-error accidents where a certain technology or equipment fails leading to a crisis, technical-error product hard where a certain technology or equipment fails causing product recalls, and publics challenging an organization arguing that the organization is operating inappropriately (Coombs, 2007). For instance, Samsung's recall of Galaxy

Note 7 in 2016 due to batteries exploding and catching fire is an example of an accidental crisis.

The preventable cluster consists of crises in which the organization is solely responsible for the crisis and should have done something to prevent it from occurring. The organization knowingly put the public at risk and failed to take appropriate precautions to avert the crisis. Therefore, attribution of crisis responsibility is high and reputational damage is severe. These types of crises include human-error accidents, human-error product harm causing product recalls, organizational misdeed where organizations broke rules and regulations, organizational misdeeds with no injuries, and organization misdeeds with injuries placing the publics at risk which led to injuries (Coombs, 2007). Extant research suggests that as the public attribution of crisis to the organization intensifies, so does the reputational damage (Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 2002; Lee, 2004; Schoofs et al., 2019). Thus, preventable crises have the greatest impact on an organization's reputation (Claeys et al., 2010; Coombs, 2007; Verhoeven et al., 2012). An example of a preventable crisis is the American Red Cross crisis in 2010 where the organization raised over $500 million meant to help the victims of the Haitian earthquake, but the organization only built six permanent homes. Red Cross claimed that the rest of the money was used to get Haitians back on their feet, only for news media to report that the money was mismanaged and some of the projects had stalled.

Depending on the degree of responsibility, SCCT outlines several strategies that an organization can use to alleviate the effects of a crisis and protect its reputation. The

strategies serve three purposes: (a) controlling the attribution of the crisis, (b) adjusting perceptions of the crisis-affected organization, and (c) minimizing any negative emotions caused by the crisis (Coombs, 1998). These four strategies are defensive strategies, diminishing strategies, rebuilding strategies, and bolstering strategies. The first three are termed as primary strategies (defensive, diminishing, and rebuilding), with the last one (bolstering) being used to augment the first three, hence called secondary strategies. Defensive strategies, also known as denial strategies, are used when the organization wants to distance itself from the events leading to the crisis. These strategies include absolute denial of the existence of a crisis, crisis managers resolving to attack the accuser or the group claiming that there is a crisis or looking for a scapegoat by blaming someone else or an external group (Coombs, 2007; 2019). For instance, during the 2018-19 Boeing crisis, the then Boeing CEO blamed the pilots for the 737 Max flight crisis.

The diminishing strategies are used when the organization wants to minimize the attributions of the organizational control or the damaging effects of the crisis by telling publics the crisis is not as bad as some parties think. These strategies include offering excuses by denying the intention to harm the publics by communicating that the events that triggered the crisis were beyond the organization's control. The crisis manager could also use justification by minimizing the perceived crisis damage, such as by stating that the crisis did not cause serious damages or injuries (Coombs, 2007, 2019). When an organization decides to use the rebuilding strategies, it is trying to improve its reputation by saying words and taking actions that are designed to benefit publics and offset any negative feelings that the publics may be having about the organization. The rebuilding

strategies also known as accommodative strategies, are used when an organization admits its culpability in the crisis and accepts full responsibility for the crisis, by either offering an apology and taking full responsibility/asking for forgiveness, or by offering financial and other forms of compensation to the victims of the crisis, or by doing both (Coombs, 2007, 2019).

The bolstering strategies are used jointly with the other three and are used as auxiliaries to cultivate a positive relationship between the publics and the organization These include strategies such as reminding the publics of the organization's previous good deeds, ingratiation where the organization praises the publics by telling them they are critical for the survival of the business, or by victimage where the organization portrays itself as a victim of the crisis by telling the publics that it, too, is a victim of the crisis. These strategies are supplemental as they may sound egocentric when used alone (Coombs, 2007, 2019).

SCCT posits that before choosing a response strategy, an organization should evaluate the reputational threat that a crisis has caused. This helps an organization to assess the amount of crisis responsibility that the publics are likely to attach to the crisis. The initial threat assessment helps an organization group the crisis as either victim, accidental, or preventable. Once the reputational threat has been assessed, the organization should look at the crisis history and prior relationship with the publics then select an appropriate response strategy. The response strategy chosen should match the crisis type. For instance, for a preventable crisis, an organization will restore its reputation if it uses rebuilding strategies. For a victim crisis, defensive strategies work

better. For an accidental crisis, diminishing strategies are ideal (Coombs, 2007; Kiambi & Shafer, 2016).

An organization has an ethical duty to fulfill when a crisis occurs. Before worrying about its reputation, the organization must protect the victims of the crisis. This is accomplished by providing two types of information, instructing information and adjusting information (Coombs, 2007). Instructing information tells the publics what they should do to protect themselves from the crisis. For instance, by warning them through the news media not to consume a certain product that is in the center of the crisis. The adjusting information addresses the psychological needs of the publics, like the steps the organization has undertaken to prevent a recurrence of such a crisis. A crisis creates an information vacuum and a need for information as the publics seek to understand what is going on. This is done by providing adjusting information on how the organization is planning to protect them, expressing concern for the victims, and corrective measures the organization is taking to mitigate the crisis (Coombs, 2007). According to SCCT, crisis managers should first address the public's physical and psychological needs before addressing the organization's reputation.

SCCT also contends that crisis responsibility serves as catalyst for affective reaction to the crisis. Emotions affect publics' behavioral intentions (Coombs, 2007). Increased crisis responsibility attributions, for example, elicit higher levels of anger and schadenfreude, or the joy of seeing other people suffer (Coombs & Holladay, 2005). However, the SCCT does not go into details about emotions and crises. Therefore, the

next section is dedicated to the integrated crisis mapping (ICM) model that deals with emotional crisis communication.

Integrated crisis mapping (ICM) model. Human beings experience both positive and negative emotions. There are several definitions that scholars have developed to define emotions. Lazarus (1991) defined emotion as "organized cognitive–motivational–relational configurations whose status changes with changes in the person–environment relationship as this is perceived and evaluated (appraisal)" (p. 38). Nabi (2002) defined emotions as short-lived, intense, internal mental states that are subjective in nature and represent evaluative reactions to events, objects, or agents that are directed toward external/environmental stimuli. These two definitions show a consensus that emotions are psychological concepts that are comprised of five components: (a) cognitive appraisal of a situation; (b) psychological component of arousal; (c) a subjective feeling state; (d) a motivational component, (e) motor expression (Nabi, 2010, p. 154).

The ICM model acknowledges that crises are emotionally charged events. During crises, the publics experience different emotions depending on the degree of crisis responsibility attribution and these emotions act as anchors of how the publics interpret the events surrounding a crisis (Jin et al., 2010; 2012). The ICM model aims at understanding different emotions that publics (called primary publics) experience during a crisis by integrating literature from both psychology and crisis communication. The theorists define primary publics as publics who: (a) "are most affected by the crisis," (b) "have shared common interests," (c) "have long-term interests and influences on the

organization's reputation and operation" (Jin et al., 2012, p. 270). The ICM model borrows heavily from the cognitive appraisal of emotions' literature.

Cognitive appraisal of emotions and crisis communication. To understand publics' emotions, the ICM model draws from cognitive appraisal theories. Cognitive appraisal refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of stimuli in relation to the environment where the stimuli appear (Lazarus, 1991). According to Lazarus (1991), there are two types of cognitive appraisal: primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. During primary appraisal, an individual interprets an event based on how dangerous it is or how threatening it is to their personal goals. Therefore, the event is appraised based on whether and how it is relevant to the individual's welfare. The primary appraisal is composed of elements such as goal relevance, goal congruence or incongruence, and the engagement of the party. Goal relevance is a central component of a crisis. According to Lazarus (1991), emotions will be generated if an event is pertinent to an individual's goals. However, if the event is irrelevant, then no emotions will be generated. Furthermore, if the goal corresponds to the needs of the individual, the event will be positively evaluated. If the goal, on the other hand, is inconsistent, the result is the elicitation of negative emotions. Lastly, the other party's contribution or responsibility (attribution) for an event affects appraisal (Lazarus, 1991).

On the other hand, during secondary appraisal, an individual assesses their ability, the available options, or the resources available to cope with the specific situation. The publics conduct secondary appraisal during a crisis by listening to the organization's plans and activities aimed at managing the crisis. Based on the crisis communication that

an organization uses, the publics assess the level of blame or give credit to the organization, their coping potential with the ramifications of the crisis, and future expectancy (Jin et al., 2012). Usually, during a crisis, blame takes precedence. The publics' coping capability and future expectation deal with the organization's efforts to avoid a recurrence of the crisis and what possible outcomes can be expected once the crisis has been mitigated. Thus, both primary and secondary appraisals involve instructing and adjusting information that the organization provides during a crisis.

Lazarus (1991) argued that based on the unique appraisal of the environment, individuals experience distinct and unique emotions that are separate from each other, with unique characteristics, hence the name discrete emotions. Discrete emotions are either positive or negative, with each of them having unique appraisal patterns has a different appraisal pattern (Lazarus, 1991). The positive emotions are empathy, sympathy/compassion, happiness/joy, hope, and relief. The negative discrete emotions are anxiety, anger, fright, guilt, shame, sadness. Each of these discrete emotions has a core relational theme associated with it. However, as most crises originate from an organization, the ICM model identified four negative emotions that the publics experience during a crisis. The focus is negative emotions because a crisis leads to negative outcomes that can have devastating effects on an organization and the publics. These four emotions are based on Lazarus's appraisal framework and therefore have unique core relational themes. They are anger, fright, sadness, and anxiety (Jin et al., 2012).

The first emotion is anger. Anger's core relational theme is a demanding offense against "me" or "mine" (Lazarus, 1991, p. 222). We get angry when we are offended and react angrily to a situation when we feel neglected or disrespected (Lindner, 2006). During a crisis, publics will experience anger when facing a serious offense from an organization embroiled in a crisis. These publics feel neglected, and the organization failed to live up to its expectations. To rationalize the crisis, the publics will first examine their ego-involvement such as their moral values, self-esteem, and welfare as mechanisms of preserving or enhancing their identities in the situation. Second, the publics will blame the organization for its failure to detect and prevent the crisis from happening. To cope with anger, the publics usually attack the organization. However, this emotional outrage dissipates when the organization adopts an appropriate crisis response strategy but the anger festers when the organization's response backfires (Jin et al., 2012).

The second emotion is fright. The core relational theme underlying fright is facing an uncertain and existential threat (Lazarus, 1991). The threat is considered concrete and likely to cause harm. The publics' appraisal process involves learning how to deal with the crisis by acknowledging that the crisis is relevant to their goals but incongruent and therefore, the publics start blaming the organization for how they feel. Due to the uncertain nature of the crisis, the publics do not know how to deal with the situation and therefore they may opt to blame the organization. Depending on their power and resources, some publics may opt for avoidance or escape from the crisis as a potential remedy (Jin et al., 2012).

The third emotion is anxiety. During a crisis, anxiety is the default emotion. The publics grapple with a lot of information from different sources and this makes the publics anxious as they are not sure what is going on. The core relational theme of anxiety is experiencing an immediate, tangible, and overwhelming danger (Lazarus, 1991). The threat is symbolic, existential, and ephemeral, making the publics anxious (Jin et al., 2012). Due to uncertainties brought forth by a crisis, the publics feel overwhelmed and start looking for solutions to handle the uncertainty. The publics then engage in an appraisal process by first evaluating the situation as relevant but incongruent with their survival goals. The publics then activate their ego-involvement as a way of protecting their ego-identities against the organization that is causing the existential threat. Due to the uncertainty that makes it hard for the publics to know how to cope with the situation, they may opt to blame the organization or just like in fright, escape or avoid the situation. As coping strategies surrounding anxiety and fright overlap, crisis managers can consolidate their resources to effectively help the publics cope with these two emotions (Jin et al., 2012).

The fourth emotion is sadness. Sadness stems from the core relational theme of experiencing irrevocable loss resulting from tangible or intangible loss, or both (Lazarus, 1991). The loss is predictable and indisputable. The publics feel that their survival goals are threatened, their ego-involvements are lost, and therefore, the publics are in frantic need for relief and comfort. Sadness fades away when the publics perceive the loss can be compensated for. In such cases, hope replaces sadness. Crisis managers can help the

publics cope with sadness by instilling hope among the publics and dispelling any feelings of hopelessness.

Internal Crisis Communication

One of the most understudied areas in crisis communication is internal crisis communication. The exclusive focus of external dimensions of crisis communication has prompted researchers to call for more research in crisis communication involving internal publics or employees (Frandsen & Johansen, 2016; Kim et al., 2019; Mazzei et al., 2012). Internal crisis communication involves communication during a crisis between the managers and employees to fill the need for information during a crisis and help employees cope with the crisis (Heide & Simonsson, 2013). Internal crisis communication is critical for the management of a crisis before it spreads to the external publics such as customers (Mazzei et al., 2012). It can also help manage employees' reactions especially negative communication that could hamper the organization's reputation. Good internal crisis communication research should start with a detailed analysis of organization-employee relationships (Frandsen & Johansen, 2011). Therefore, the following section analyses both positive and negative organization-employee relationships.

Organization-employee relationships (OERs). During a crisis, employees play the role of receivers and senders of information. The quality of the EORs determines the type of information that the employees will send to the external publics such as family, friends, and the media. Employees have contractual relationships with the organization, and this influences how they react to a crisis. Therefore, organizations are in constant

relationship management with the employees by nurturing mutually beneficial relationships with the employees (Park & Reber, 2011). As research suggests, positive relationships between an organization and its publics serve as a "buffer" during a crisis, helping to safeguard the organization's reputation due to the halo effect created by these relationships (Coombs, 2006). On the other hand, unfavorable relationships have a velcro effect and a crisis further damages the relationship. Therefore, organizations must focus on building favorable relationships with its publics as this will help the organization manage a crisis effectively.

Although the focus of most studies has been external publics, employees are also critical publics who can have both halo and velcro effects depending on the nature of the OERs (Kim et al., 2019). The halo effect demonstrates the effects of good organization-publics relationships on reputation and purchase intentions among other crisis outcomes (Coombs, 2019; Kim, 2017; Sohn & Lariscy, 2012). For instance, Brown and White (2011) explored how student-university relationships influenced students' perception of the university's crisis responsibility and found that prior favorable relationships significantly affected the university's crisis responsibility regardless of the crisis response strategy that the organization adopted. Likewise, Mazzei and her colleagues (2012) found that positive employees' communication during a crisis and decreased negative word-of-mouth were a result of quality OERs. This emphasizes the significance of quality relationships between the organization and its employees. As receivers and senders of information, employees engage in several communication behaviors which I will discuss next.

Employee communication behaviors. A crisis affects employees just like other publics, prompting employees to communicate about the crisis either internally or externally. Four factors influence employees' communication behaviors during a crisis: organization type, crisis type and history, communication strategies, and crisis cultures (Frandsen & Johansen, 2011; Mazzei et al., 2012). The quality of the employee-organization relationships affects employees' communication behaviors. Good relationships will have a halo effect during and after a crisis while bad relationships will have velcro effects. With good relationships, employees act as advocates for the organization and do not leak negative information to external publics such as the media during a crisis (Kim & Rhee, 2011). On the other hand, when employees are not proud of their organization, they tend to distance themselves from the organization and refuse to be pro bono ambassadors during a crisis (Frandsen & Johansen, 2011).

There are two aspects of employee communication behaviors. These are scouting and megaphoning (Kim & Rhee, 2011). These aspects are more pronounced in times of emergency or during a crisis. Megaphoning refers to the probability of employees' volunteer and selective information sharing about the organizational strengths and weaknesses (Kim & Rhee, 2011). On the other hand, scouting refers to the employees' willingness to search and bring important information to the organization through environmental scanning by monitoring how the external publics are reacting and communicating about stressful moment such as a crisis. Both megaphoning and scouting are collectively known as microboundary spanning whereby employees play the role of boundary spanners by serving as linkages between the organization and the external

publics. By being boundary spanners, employees rely on the positive relationships they have with the organization and feel empathetic toward the organization during a crisis (Kim & Rhee, 2011). However, employees who have had poor-quality relationships with the organization are more likely to distance themselves from the organization to the extent that they start empathizing with the external publics and the victims of a crisis. This activates negative megaphoning or the spread of negative word-of-mouth about the employees' organization to the external publics via the media (Kim & Rhee, 2011). Since there is already research on the effects of good EORS on internal reputation and employees' supportive behavior, this study seeks to focus on the impact of negative EORs and how those affect internal reputation in addition to employees' unsupportive behavior (Kim et al., 2019; Moon & Rhee, 2013).

Negative employee-organization relationships (NEORs). One of the most critical concepts in public relations and crisis communication is the organization-public relationship (OPR). Researchers in the public relations field have developed several measures meant to examine the nature of positive OPRs (for instance, Huang, 2001). These are control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, and trust (Grunig et al., 1992). Research suggests that these positive employee relationships result in employees' supportive behavior during crisis such as defending the organization and performing microboundary spanning duties (Kim et al., 2019). These positive employee relationships include commitment, control mutuality, satisfaction, and trust. However, there is a lack of adequate literature on negative organization-employee relationships (NEORs) and how that affects employees' behavior during a crisis such as through negative megaphoning

and lack of desire to help the organization overcome a crisis. NEORs refer to the negative state which exists between the organization and its employees where the actions of either have negative social, economic, political, and cultural welfare of the other. These NEORs focus on factors that lead to relationship deterioration between the internal publics and the organization include distrust, dissatisfaction, control dominance, and dissolution (Moon & Rhee, 2013).

Distrust refers to a deep doubt situation in which one party is suspicious of the other party's reliability. It is "one party's level of suspicion and fear about the other party's conduct and the willingness to close oneself off from the other party" (Moon & Rhee, 2013, p. 695). It is the opposite of trust or the willingness and confidence of one party to open up to the other party (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Distrust shapes the initial impressions about an organization in crisis and subsequently affects how internal publics will interact with the organization. Distrust has stronger effects on a relationship than trust does, hence a need to understand how it affects internal publics during a crisis (Slovic, 1993).

Dissatisfaction occurs when expectations fall short. Relational dissatisfaction occurs when the cost of the relationship outweighs the benefits. This leads to negative outcomes such as regret, disappointment, and discomfort. Dissatisfaction is the extent "to which one party's feelings toward the other worsens because negative expectations and beliefs about the relationship are intensified" (Moon & Rhee, 2013, p. 694). Relational dissatisfaction is the opposite of satisfaction or the degree to which one party has favorable feelings about the other party, due to reinforcement of positive expectations

about the parties' mutual relationship (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Relational dissatisfaction is one of the main reasons for disintegration of relationships and has a greater impact effect on customers than satisfaction (Yang & Yang., 2009). Therefore, managers should monitor internal publics' dissatisfaction and apply managerial skills to repair their relationships with the internal publics.

Control dominance is the opposite of control mutuality. Control mutuality is "the degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 3). Thus, parties consult with each other before making major decisions. However, in some situations one party may perceive the other party as an object that needs to be controlled, leading to control dominance. Control dominance refers to "the degree to which one party intentionally neglects and controls the other party when it comes to decision making" (Moon & Rhee, 2013, p. 695). Control dominance is characterized by imbalances of power between parties, unilateral action, and dependence. This aspect involves one party's influence on the other party without consent or even seeking to understand the other party. This is evident in some organizations where management does not consult the employees before making decisions that have an impact on the employees, affecting their morale and commitment to the organization.

Dissolution refers to one's party's willingness to break their relationship with an organization due to negative expectations from the organization. It is "the extent to which one party is willing to cut off the relationship with the other party due to the lack of desire to invest energy in continuing the relationship and having no positive future expectations about the relationship" (Moon & Rhee, 2013, p. 695). It is the opposite of

commitment or one party's willingness and belief that a relationship is worth fighting for and promoting (Hon & Grunig, 1999). The main antecedents of dissolution are unfairness and dissatisfaction (Ping, 1994). Both favorable and unfavorable EORs affect the internal reputation of an organization. The following part delves into internal organizational reputation.

Internal Organizational Reputation

Organizational reputation is built inside out in that it has to start from within before it is manifested to the external publics. Reputation refers to a collective appraisal that numerous publics make about an organization's ability to meet the publics' demand for goods and services (Fombrun et al., 2000). Both external and internal publics are key in determining an organization's reputation (Fombrun et al., 2000). Externally, a good reputation attracts more customers, more investors, and favorable media coverage (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004). Internally, a good reputation attracts more talent to the organization, retain existing employees, and promotes citizenship behaviors (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004; Roberts & Dowling, 2002). As ambassadors of goodwill, employees are seen as reliable sources of information for the external publics and journalists are always looking for an insider's perspective, especially during a crisis. Therefore, employees are critical in managing a crisis and maintaining an organization's internal reputation.

Internal reputation refers is defined as "the employees' overall evaluation of an organization based on their direct experiences within the company and all forms of communication" (Men, 2014, p. 256). Internal reputation involves the employees' perception of the organization which determines what the employees say publicly about

the organization. Employees' perception becomes the premise that external publics use to evaluate an organization's reputation (Men, 2014). Therefore, having a good internal reputation is manifested externally. Also, a good internal reputation underpins employees' identification with the organization's values such as mission, vision, and objectives in addition to increased productivity and commitment to the organization in the long run (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004).

For an organization to handle a crisis and help the publics cope with the uncertainty surrounding a crisis, the timing of the crisis communication message matters. Mostly, organizations' CEOs are the main crisis spokespeople. During a crisis, leaders play a critical role in deciding the most appropriate time to communicate about a crisis. Thus, the following section explores two aspects of the timing of the crisis communication message.

The Timing of Crisis Communication Messages

When an organization is in crisis, there is a lot of pressure coming from different publics to have the organization speak about the crisis. The timing aspect of communication about the crisis determines when the organization should release the crisis information, or the "release of information acknowledging that a crisis exists" (Coombs, 2015, p. 144). Timing is a critical aspect for the management of a crisis effectively as it helps to mitigate the negative effects of a crisis (Beldad et al., 2018; Claeys et al., 2013; Hegner et al., 2018; Lee, 2016).

Scholars interested in the timing aspect of crisis communication messages have explored it from two dimensions: stealing thunder and thunder. Stealing thunder, also

known as an ex-ante crisis timing strategy or a self-disclosure strategy, is a proactive communication strategy that occurs when the organization decides to self-disclose or release the crisis information to the publics before the publics get the information from other parties like media or government agencies (Arpan & Pompper, 2003). On the other hand, the thunder strategy, also known as ex-post crisis timing strategy, is a reactive crisis communication strategy that occurs when the organization in a crisis decides to wait for a third party to disclose the information about a crisis with the organization responding to the disclosed information (Arpan & Pompper, 2003). When an organization decides to use thunder, it takes the burden of responding to the crisis to lessen the effects of the crisis (Beldad et al., 2018).

The thunder and stealing thunder timing strategies can be traced back to court cases and politics. Research shows that convicted suspects who revealed incriminating information about them during trials received less punishment for their offense compared to when a prosecutor introduced the negative information about the suspects (Williams et al., 1993). Moreover, these suspects are viewed as highly credible, given lower perceptions of crime severity, and more sympathy is displayed toward them (Williams & Dolnik, 2001). In politics, studies suggest that politicians who use stealing thunder get lesser negative coverage and voters view such politicians as credible (Kim, 2019).

Bringing these concepts to organizations, stealing thunder can mitigate the public's negative perceptions of an organization because consumers view an organization that steals thunder as trustworthy (Beldad et al., 2018). Furthermore, stealing thunder causes consumers to perceive the crisis as less severe than if the organization waits to

respond to a crisis that has already been reported in the media. (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). A crisis creates an information vacuum which can easily be filled with rumors and inaccurate information, thus there is a need to fill the information void left by the crisis (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005; Beldad et al., 2018; Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012). Filling this information void helps organizations manage the crisis effectively before it escalates into unmanageable levels. Stealing thunder allows an organization to take control of the crisis narrative, giving the organization the framing power to dictate the terms of the crisis while also taking control from the other sources that could have broken the news about the crisis (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012). This control helps the organization regulate the flow of crisis information (Fennis & Stroebe, 2014). Once the narrative is controlled, the crisis manager can go back, do more sensemaking of the crisis before coming forward and sense-giving about the crisis. By using stealing thunder, the organization then becomes a source of news rather than a target of negative media coverage and investigation from government agencies.

Research suggests that stealing thunder is beneficial to an organization in crisis. Stealing thunder is viewed as a proactive crisis management strategy and as a part of ethical apology which helps boost the organizational reputation by making the organization be viewed as sincere and credible (Arpan & Pompper, 2003; Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). Self-disclosure of a crisis also lessens the negative effects of post-crisis organizational reputation than waiting to respond to third parties (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012; Claeys et al., 2013). Moreover, self-disclosure helps to mitigate reputational harm by diverting media attention away from any negative publicity

generated by a crisis (Claeys et al., 2016). This helps to limit the media from sensationalizing the crisis (Lee, 2016). Other researchers have reported that stealing thunder helps in maintaining a good reputation, even during a crisis (Fowler, 2017).

In addition to reputation, extant research suggests that stealing thunder helps in post-crisis supportive behavior. Compared to thunder, stealing thunder positively affects consumers' purchase intentions and reduces the chances of spreading negative word-of-mouth (Einwiller & Johar, 2013; Fennis & Stroebe, 2014). Other studies suggest that stealing thunder helps in continued organizational support from publics such as repeated product purchases (Beldad et al., 2018; Lee, 2016).

Several theoretical streams have been proposed to explain the benefits of stealing thunder and its effectiveness during a crisis (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). First, stealing thunder can be explained in terms of the inoculation theory, in which stealing thunder allows organizations to prepare the publics for an impending attack by inoculating them with a weaker version of the looming attack (McGuire 1964; Williams et al., 1993).

Second, commodity theory proposes that messages are similar to commodities, in that the more messages there are, the less valuable they are (Brock, 1968). By stealing thunder, an organization discloses sufficient information to reporters who are left with little conflict to report about. This disclosure helps eliminate reporters' competition to have a scoop and resultantly reducing reporters' desire to cover the story unless the news media consider the story as still newsworthy for reasons other than conflict (Arpan &

Pompper, 2003). Journalists are always looking for something fresh to report and when stealing thunder is done, the currency aspect of news is diminished.

The third explanation for the efficacy of the stealing thunder phenomenon is disconfirmation of expectations theory (Eagly et al., 1978). Generally, people do not expect someone to reveal damaging information about them, thus, by stealing thunder, organizations will be disconfirming the expectations, which could be seen as key in building reputation and credibility. Revealing crisis information to the publics violates the publics' expectations. There are two situational factors that influence how communicators release information: knowledge bias and reporting bias. Knowledge bias posits that communicators have scarce information that hampers their ability to distribute the information they have as truth to their audiences. Reporting bias suggests that communicators' motivation to convey truth is compromised especially when audiences can detect the communicators' persuasive intent (Lee, 2016). Thus, when crisis communicators deliver information that is congruent with their biases, the publics will perceive the communicators as less credible and less persuasive (Arpan & Pompper, 2003). On the other hand, when communicators disclose information that violates the expected biases, the publics perceive them as more credible and highly persuasive (Eagly et al., 1981). The publics then believe the communicator acted out of character by disclosing negative information, making the message more credible. Furthermore, when crisis spokespeople disconfirm reporters' expectations, the reporters perceive the spokespeople as credible, which leads to greater acceptance of the crisis messages (Arpan & Pompper, 2003).

The change of meaning hypothesis is another explanation for stealing thunder (Hamilton & Zanna, 1974). According to this hypothesis, when organizations disclose negative information about themselves, the publics will try to resolve the dilemma by altering the meaning of the disclosure so that the information conveyed is more compatible with their pre-existing perceptions of the organization (Arpan & Pompper, 2003; Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012). Thus, the change of meaning could make the publics discount the significance of a message or even downplay the severity of the crisis (Arpan & Pompper, 2003).

Most of the studies on timing of disclosure of crisis information (stealing thunder and thunder) have been done exclusively with the focus being on external publics (publics). This has created a gap in research where the effects of timing have not been explored in an internal context involving internal publics (employees). Thus, there is a need to explore the positive benefits of stealing thunder compared to thunder in helping organizations restore their reputations as well as fostering positive and supportive behavior.

CHAPTER III: HYPOTHESES

Positive organization-employee relationships have been shown to improve an organization's internal reputation and promote employees' supportive behavior during a crisis (Kim et al., 2019). However, there is only anecdotal evidence of how negative organization-employee relationships affect internal reputation (Frandsen & Johansen, 2011). To add to the existing internal crisis communication literature, this study seeks to understand the role of negative organization- employee relationships (NEORs) in internal reputation and unsupportive behavior. Specifically, this study will examine how the effects of negative employee-organization relationships can be mediated by negative emotions and moderated by crisis response strategies, as well as how this affects internal reputation and employees' unsupportive behavior during a crisis.

Organizational reputation is one of the most studied aspects of crisis communication. When a crisis is poorly handled, it can hurt an organization's reputation (Coombs, 2007; Kiambi & Shafer, 2016; Men, 2014; Schoofs et al., 2019). As a result, during a crisis, reputation management becomes a top priority for an organization, whether internally or externally (Coombs & Holladay, 2002; Kim et al., 2019). The pre-existing relationships between the company and the publics form the foundation of reputation (Coombs, 2007). For instance, perceptions of positive relationships lead to favorable organizational reputation, especially when the nature of the relationships is experiential rather than reputational (Yang & Cha, 2015; Yang, 2007). Internal publics (employees) have experiential relationships with the organization, and this implies that

there is a strong relationship between the quality of these relationships and the organizational reputation that employees hold for the organization they work for (Broom & Sha, 2012; Yang & Grunig, 2005). When the quality of the organization-publics relationships is good, the publics are more likely to have favorable attitudes toward the organization, which improves internal reputation and positive megaphoning (Hong & Yang, 2009; Kim & Rhee, 2011). However, there is limited research examining the effects of negative organization-employee relationships such as dissatisfaction and control dominance on internal crisis communication and unwillingness to support the organization during a crisis which can be done by spreading negative word-of-mouth (negative megaphoning). Since positive EOR has a positive impact on internal reputation, negative EOR will likely result in negative reputation. Therefore, this study proposes that:

H_1: Negative EOR will be negatively associated with (H_{1a}) internal reputation and (H_{1b}) positively associated with unsupportive behavioral intention.

Crisis response strategies are a central tenet of situational crisis communication theory (SCCT). According to the theory, an organization should select a response plan based on who is responsible for the crisis (Coombs, 2007). These response strategies range from defensive (such as attacking the accuser and scapegoating) to total rebuilding (such as apology and compensation). Empirical research in crisis communication suggests that rebuilding response strategies have positive effects on reputation, reduction of the spread of negative word-of-mouth (negative megaphoning), and increased purchase intentions toward the organization's products (Lee, 2005; Lyon & Cameron,

2004; Kiambi & Shafer, 2016). Moreover, the positive effects of rebuilding strategies have been studied across different industries. For instance, moral-harm and product-harm crises (Hegner et al., 2018), food poisoning (Crijns et al., 2017), car recall (Choi & Chung, 2013), product tampering (Claeys et al., 2010). Prior findings support that rebuilding strategies have a more positive impact than defensive strategies. Therefore:

H_2: Compared to defensive strategies, rebuilding strategies will be more positively associated with (H_{2a}) internal reputation and negatively associated with (H_{2b}) unsupportive behavioral intention.

Previous research suggests that positive organization-publics relationships have a positive impact on crisis outcomes irrespective of the crisis response strategies that organizations use (Ki & Brown 2013). Moreover, pre-existing organizations-employee relationships are the most critical factor in positive supportive behavior such as positive megaphoning and boundary spanning (Kim et al., 2019; Kim & Rhee, 2011; Mazzei et al., 2012). One study investigated the effects of crisis response strategies on employees' behavioral outcomes, but message strategies had no moderating effect on how EOR affected internal reputation and employee supportive behavior (Kim et al., 2019). However, this study was exploring positive EOR, and the impact of crisis response strategies might be different when exploring negative EOR. Due to the positive nature of rebuilding strategies, this study seeks to test the moderating effects of message strategies on internal reputation and unsupportive behavioral intention, by proposing that:

H_3: Negative EOR will moderate the relationship between crisis response strategies and (H_{3a}) internal reputation and (H_{3b}) unsupportive behavioral intention.

NEOR's effect on internal reputation will decrease when rebuilding strategies are used and increase when defensive strategies are used. Likewise, NEOR's effect on unsupportive behavioral intention will increase when defensive strategies are used and decrease when rebuilding strategies are used.

The timing of the crisis communication message is another important aspect of crisis communication research. Appropriate timing can help an organization in mitigating the negative effects of a crisis (Beldad et al., 2018). During a crisis, organizations can employ two timing strategies: thunder and stealing thunder. When an organization discloses crisis information before other parties, such as the media, the strategy is known as stealing thunder. The thunder strategy is used when an organization decides to wait for another party to reveal crisis information before responding to the crisis (Arpan & Pompper, 2003; Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). Research suggests that the stealing thunder strategy has more positive effects on reputation and supportive behavior than the thunder strategy (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012; Fennis & Stroebe, 2014; Hegner et al., 2018; Lee, 2016). The benefits of stealing thunder have also been studied in the context of internal crisis communication (Kim et al., 2019). Kim et al. (2019) found that the employees with positive EOR engage in more supportive behavior when thunder strategy is used than when stealing thunder strategy is used. This could be attributed to microboundary spanning behavior in that when a third party like a news channel discloses the crisis information, the employees may feel that the organization needs more support and defense, than when the organization decides to disclose the crisis information before the other party. Negative EOR is expected to have a negative impact on

organizational reputation and positive effects on unsupportive behavioral intention. However, if an organization steals thunder, the employees, just like external publics, might rate the organization more positively than when the organization uses thunder (Beldad et al., 2018). Due to the positive effects of stealing thunder compared to thunder, this study proposes that:

H_4: Compared to thunder, stealing thunder will be more positively associated with (H_{4a}) internal reputation and negatively associated with (H_{4b}) unsupportive behavioral intention.

As previous findings suggest, stealing thunder helps organizations handle a crisis better than when thunder is used. This study seeks to examine how timing will moderate the effects of negative EOR on internal reputation and unsupportive behavioral intention. Extant research suggests that stealing thunder has positive effects on reputation and will limit the chances of publics spreading negative word-of-mouth (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012; Hegner et al., 2018). Therefore, this study proposes that:

H_5: Negative EOR will moderate the relationship between timing and (H_{5a}) internal reputation and (H_{5b}) unsupportive behavioral intention. NEOR's effect on internal reputation will decrease when stealing thunder is used and increase when thunder is used. Likewise, NEOR's effect on unsupportive behavioral intention will increase when thunder is used and decrease when stealing thunder is used.

The role of emotions in a crisis is another aspect of crisis communication. A crisis is an emotion-laden incident that induces emotions among various publics (Kim & Cameron, 2011). The ICM model posits that primary publics experience four dominant

negative emotions that run high during a crisis—anxiety, sadness, anger, and fright (Jin et al., 2010; 2012). These emotions depend on the available coping strategies that are at the publics' disposal. Employees meet the primary publics criterion due to their proximity to the organization, have mutual interests with the organization, and have long-term influence on the organization's reputation (Jin et al., 2012). Employees, more than any other publics, identify with the organization, and as a result, they are likely to experience stress, anger, fear, among other negative effects of a crisis (Wang & Wanjek, 2018). When it comes to the four negative emotions, employees are likely to experience: (a) anxiety when confronted with an immediate, concrete, and overwhelming threat; (b) anger when facing a demanding offense from their organization; (c) fright when confronted with an uncertain and existential threat; and (d) sadness when confronted with irreversible loss resulting from tangible or intangible loss, or both (Kim et al., 2019; Lazarus, 1991).

Literature on emotional crisis communication suggests that the publics' emotional responses to a crisis can help scholars and organizations predict negative crisis outcomes like the spread of negative word-of-mouth, reduced purchasing intentions, and negative organizational reputation (Coombs & Holladay, 2007; Jin et al., 2012; Wang & Wanjek, 2018). Researchers in this area have also explored how emotions mediate the effect of crisis responsibility on crisis outcomes like organizational reputation (Coombs & Holladay, 2007; Jin et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2019). Other researchers have argued that emotions are a perception derived from the crisis response strategy rather than the crisis itself (Van der Meer & Verhoeven, 2014). For example, if an organization employs

rebuilding strategies, the publics are likely to sympathize with the organization. On the other hand, if an organization employs defensive strategies, the public may become enraged with the organization (Van der Meer & Verhoeven, 2014). All of these scholars concentrated on external publics, leaving internal publics unstudied, particularly employees' emotional responses to a crisis. However, a recent study examining how negative emotions mediate the effects of positive EOR and crisis response strategies found that anxiety and anger mediated the relationship between positive EOR and crisis response strategies on internal reputation. Negative emotions, on the other hand, did not mediate the effects of positive EOR and crisis response strategy on employees' supportive behaviors (Kim et al., 2019). Specifically, positive EOR was negatively associated with anger. Furthermore, anger had a strong negative impact on internal reputation. Anxiety was negatively associated with crisis response strategy but positively associated with internal reputation. Based on the existing literature, this study predicts that:

H_6: Negative emotions will mediate the effects of negative EOR and crisis response strategies on (H_{6a}) internal reputation and (H_{6b}) unsupportive behavioral intention.

Table 1

Summary of Theory, Hypotheses, and Research Purposes

Hypotheses	**Literature**	**Variables**	**Analyses**
H_1: Negative EOR will be negatively associated with (H_{1a}) internal reputation and (H_{1b}) positively associated with unsupportive behavioral intention.	Employee-Organization Relationships; Employee communication behaviors	**I.V.** Negative EOR **D.Vs.** Internal reputation & unsupportive behavioral intention	Regression
H_2: Compared to defensive strategies, rebuilding strategies will be more positively associated with (H_{2a}) internal reputation and negatively associated with (H_{2b}) unsupportive behavioral intention.	Situational crisis communication theory (SCCT); Coombs (2007)	**I.V.** Crisis response strategies (defensive vs. rebuilding) **D.Vs.** Internal reputation & unsupportive behavioral intention	Regression
H_3: Negative EOR will moderate the relationship between crisis response strategies and (H_{3a}) internal reputation and (H_{3b})	SCCT, Employee-Organization Relationships; Employee	**Mo.V.** Interaction term of NEOR and crisis response strategy.	Regression

unsupportive behavioral intention. NEOR's effect on internal reputation will decrease when rebuilding strategies are used and increase when defensive strategies are used. Likewise, NEOR's effect on unsupportive behavioral intention will increase when defensive strategies are used and decrease when rebuilding strategies are used.	communication behaviors	**D.V.** Internal reputation & unsupportive behavioral intention	
H_4: Compared to thunder, stealing thunder will be more positively associated with (H_{4a}) internal reputation and negatively associated with (H_{4b}) unsupportive behavioral intention.	Commodity theory, change of meaning hypothesis, disconfirmation of expectations theory, framing theory, inoculation theory, and cognitive dissonance theory	**I.V.** Stealing thunder **D.Vs.** Internal reputation & unsupportive behavioral intention	Regression

H_5: Negative EOR will moderate the relationship between timing and (H_{5a}) internal reputation and (H_{5b}) unsupportive behavioral intention. NEOR's effect on internal reputation will decrease when stealing thunder is used and increase when thunder is used. Likewise, NEOR's effect on unsupportive behavioral intention will increase when thunder is used and decrease when stealing thunder is used.	SCCT, Employee-Organization Relationships; Employee communication behaviors	**Mod.V.** Interaction term of NEOR and crisis response strategy **D.V.** Internal reputation & unsupportive behavioral intention	Regression
H_6: Negative emotions will mediate the effects of negative EOR and crisis response strategies on ($H6_a$) internal reputation and ($H6_b$) unsupportive behavioral intention.	ICM Model, cognitive appraisal theory	**Med.V.** Negative emotions **D.V.** Internal reputation & unsupportive behavioral intention	SEM

CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGY

The current study examines how the effects of negative EOR can be moderated by crisis response strategies, crisis timing strategies, and mediated by four negative emotions. To do so, this study employs an experiment.

Experimental Design

A 2 (crisis response strategy: rebuilding vs. defensive) x 2 (timing: stealing thunder vs. thunder) between-subjects online experiment was conducted to test the hypotheses. Crisis response strategy factor and timing factor are completely crossed, creating four experimental conditions: rebuilding strategy with stealing thunder, rebuilding strategy with thunder, defensive strategy with stealing thunder, and defensive strategy with thunder. The researcher manipulated the independent variables of crisis response strategy and the crisis message timing strategy. Crisis history was included as a control variable. Employee-organization relationships (EORs) were measured using latent constructs.

Experimental Stimuli

To maintain the experimental design's ecological validity, this study adopted an actual crisis involving bots where software programs performed repetitive tasks and consequently generating fraudulent survey responses. The study used press release excerpts describing the bots' issue as something that has gone unchecked for a while and was threatening the believability of survey responses collected through MTurk. These

press releases were based on recent reports that bots have been taking MTurk surveys and there are offshore survey warehouses that have people taking surveys even when they do not qualify to take the surveys (MTurk's bot panic, 2018). Two faculty members with a plethora of experience in both experimental design and strategic communication reviewed and edited the stimuli to ensure both validity of the scenarios and appropriateness of the stimuli. Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos was the crisis spokesperson in this study. During a crisis, the CEO is assumed as the organization's spokesperson and the crisis leader (Lucero et al., 2009).

For the crisis response strategies, one of the conditions had a rebuilding strategy where the organization acknowledged management failure in preventing the crisis from occurring. The other condition had a defensive strategy in which the organization blamed other circumstances rather than the management. In this condition, the crisis spokesperson stated that the crisis was unintentionally caused by a technical failure. All of these types of crises are common in the literature on crisis communication (for instance, Coombs, 2007). According to the SCCT, for a crisis response strategy to have the greatest impact, it should be matched with the type of crisis (Coombs et al., 2016). Therefore, a defensive strategy would be appropriate for a crisis with lower crisis responsibility such as a technical error product accident. On the other hand, a rebuilding strategy would be ideal when an organization is directly responsible for a crisis, such as human-error product harm. For the timing strategy conditions, the researcher manipulated the first party to reveal crisis information. For the stealing thunder condition, the organization's CEO was the person who was the first to break the news about the crisis.

Therefore, participants read an excerpt from a press release by Amazon's CEO revealing the bots' issue and informing clients who may have been affected by the bots. For the thunder condition, participants read a press release that was released by Amazon's CEO in response to a news report by the Associated Press (AP). The timing aspect of crisis messages was based on previous research on timing (for instance, see Beldad et al., 2018; Hegner et al., 2018).

Four vignettes were designed to portray different conditions. After consenting to take part in the study, the participants were randomly assigned to read one of the four vignettes and then asked to respond to questions based on the condition they were assigned to. Each vignette contained a different crisis response strategy. Taken together, there were four conditions for this study, with two independent variables, crisis timing strategy, and crisis response strategy. These were: (1) rebuilding with stealing thunder, (2) defensive with stealing thunder (3) rebuilding with thunder, (4) defensive with thunder (See Appendix A on page 107).

Participants

A total of 500 study participants were recruited through Amazon's research tool, Mechanical Turk (MTurk). The website allows people to get paid after completing surveys (Bohannon, 2011; Gibson et al., 2011). MTurk is a valid data collection method similar to traditional paper and pen surveys (Buhrmester et al., 2011). MTurk also allows a researcher to request participants in specific professions which helps in reaching a certain demographic group. For this study, the researcher recruited MTurk workers or the people who take surveys posted on MTurk. Being a crisis involving internal publics,

using MTurk workers improved the ecological validity of the study. Participants were paid one dollar for participating in the study. All procedures were reviewed and approved by the institutional review board (IRB) from a large Midwestern university. The participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions using an automated randomizer built into the Qualtrics online survey software.

Procedure

To link the study between Qualtrics and MTurk, the researcher opened a new project on MTurk which included three keywords: experiment, crisis communication, and internal crisis communication. In the project head section of the new project, the researcher provided a brief description of the study: "The researcher hopes to have you evaluate how an organization talks about a crisis to its employees." A more detailed summary of the study was provided in the design layout section of the new project. The next page included a link where after clicking it, participants read an informed consent form that described the study's aim of collecting information about internal crisis and informed them of their rights as research participants. The participants were then presented with one condition based on Qualtrics' inbuilt randomization. After reading the message based on the condition they were assigned to, the participants first responded to a screening question asking them: "What was the crisis you just read about?" Results from participants who failed the screening question were excluded from the analysis in both the pretest and the main study. Then responded to questions about several dependent variables such as reputation, negative EORs, and negative emotions. Lastly, the

participants responded to demographic questions such as income, level of education, and marital status.

Independent Variables

There were two independent variables for this study: crisis timing strategy and crisis response strategy. These independent variables were manipulated to display different conditions.

Timing. For the timing, the participants were exposed to a stimulus message in which Amazon (MTurk) CEO Jeff Bezos issued a statement about the issue of the bots. In the stealing thunder condition, Bezos was the first person to break the news about the bots to the internal publics. The publics had not heard the information from any other source. For the thunder condition, Bezos responded to a news report that MTurk had been hit by a series of bots. In this condition, the news about the bots had already been broken by a news medium and therefore Bezos was just responding to the news report (See the appendix for the four conditions).

Crisis Response Strategies. The crisis response strategy was a within-subjects variable. It was based on previous research in SCCT (Coombs, 2007; Coombs, 2019). The participants were exposed to a stimulus message in which Amazon (MTurk) CEO Jeff Bezos issued a statement about the issue of bots. For the defensive strategy condition, the CEO distanced the company from the issue by blaming external circumstances to protect Amazon's reputation. In the case of the rebuilding strategy condition, the CEO accepted responsibility for the crisis and apologized to the affected clients, claiming that the crisis was caused by a management failure.

Dependent Variables

There were four dependent variables in this study. These variables were measured using items adapted from extant research in crisis and organizational communication. These variables were negative employee-organization relationships (NEOR), internal reputation, unsupportive behavioral intention, and negative emotions. All the variables were measured on a 1-7 Likert-type agreement scale.

Negative Employee-Organization Relationships (NEOR). To assess NEOR, this study adopted Moon and Rhee's (2013) four measures: dissatisfaction (M = 2.37, SD, = 1.59, α = .95), distrust (M = 3.32, SD = 1.71, α = .93), control dominance (M = 3.54, SD = 1.64, α = .95), and dissolution (M = 3.47, SD = 1.32, α = .96).

Dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction was operationalized as the displeasure that internal publics have toward the organization due to increased negative expectations from the organization. It was measured using five items. These five items were: "My relationship with this organization is bad"; "I do not have good feelings about the relationship I have with this company"; "I feel that the relationship with this corporation is a disadvantage"; "I am disappointed about the relationship with this corporation"; and "Relationship with this company is not as good as I had expected."

Distrust. Distrust was operationalized as internal publics' doubt and fear about the organization's conduct and unwillingness to be open up to the internal publics. It was measured using five items. These items were: "This corporation puts more weight on its private interests than on public interests"; "This corporation often deceives publics intentionally"; "This corporation seems to hide its problems"; "This company has the

tendency to blame consumers or the environment when the problem or fault is its own"; and "This corporation does not seem to practice transparent management."

Control Dominance. Control dominance was operationalized as the degree to which the organization intentionally ignores the internal publics' suggestions and makes decisions involving the internal publics without consulting them. It was assessed using five items. These items were: "This corporation ignores opinions of consumers like me"; "This corporation does not like having the opinions of people like me to be considered in its decision-making processes"; "This corporation seems to not care about the opinions of people like me"; "This corporation does not try to be in the shoes of people like me"; and "This corporation does not give people like me a chance to voice an opinion."

Dissolution. Dissolution was operationalized as the extent to which internal publics are willing to terminate their contractual relationship with the organization due to lack of desire to continue working at the organization. It was measured using five items. These items were: "I plan to my relationship with the company"; "I don't want to continue the relationship with this company anymore"; I regret the relationship with this company"; I will discontinue the relationship with this company soon"; and "If possible, I want to end the relationship with this corporation right now."

I checked the dimensionality of the four dimensions then summed them to one variable that I called NEOR (negative employee-organization relationship). I conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) which produced an acceptable one-factor solution with all items retained through the oblique rotation method (PROMAX). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure for the NEOR scale was .96 and Bartlett's test [χ^2 =

11552.92 (190), $p < .000$] were all acceptable. A scree plot confirmed that one factor produced eigenvalues that were greater than 1.00. I labeled this unidimensional factor as the *NEOR Scale* and it comprised of 20 items exploring the negative relationships between employees and an organization. The one-factor solution observed explained 61.03 % of the cumulative variance with a 12.21 eigenvalue. The final uni-factor solution produced very good reliability, $\alpha = .97$.

Internal Reputation. Internal reputation was operationalized as a favorable collective judgment held by internal publics toward the organization for which they work, as a result of the organization's willingness and ability to meet the needs of the internal publics and communicate the truth during a crisis. This variable was assessed using four items adapted from the corporate reputation scale (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). The scale was slightly modified to assess internal reputation. The four items that were used to measure internal reputation are: "MTurk is concerned with the well-being of its workers"; "MTurk is basically dishonest"; "I do not trust MTurk to tell the truth about this incident"; and "Under most circumstances, I would be likely to believe what the MTurk says." The scale had good reliability and items were combined into one variable to aid in analysis ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 1.53$, $\alpha = .94$).

Unsupportive behavioral intention. Unsupportive behavioral intention was operationalized as the unwillingness to help the organization during a crisis such as taking a pay cut or accepting extra responsibilities that would help the organization mitigate the crisis. This variable was assessed using five items adopted from the Nikandrou and Tsachouridi's (2015). These items were: "I will talk to people about the

problems of our services and products"; "I will agree with people who criticize my organization"; "If asked to do something to help the company, I would NOT do it because it will involve extra responsibility"; "If asked to do something to help the company, I would NOT do it because this might involve some risk"; and "If asked to do something to help the company, I would NOT do it because it might bring me some discomfort." The five items had good reliability, and a composite variable was created to aid in analysis (M = 3.15, SD = 1.73, α = .91).

Negative Emotions. There were four negative emotions that this study assessed. These were sadness, anger, anxiety, and fright. The four emotions were measured using the Differential Emotional Scale (DES) developed by Fredrickson and her colleagues (2003) and Izard (1993).

Sadness. Sadness was operationalized as the emotion that internal publics experience due to a loss that threatens their survival goals of working for MTurk, thereby resulting in unhappiness. To measure sadness, I asked the participants to read the CEO's message and respond to the statement: "When reading the CEO's message, I felt sad, downhearted, and unhappy." The three items were combined into one scale after running reliability tests (M = 4.02, SD = 2.96, α = .88).

Anger. Anger was operationalized as the emotion that internal publics experience when they feel offended or upset by the CEO's message. To measure anger, I asked the participants to read the CEO's message and respond to the statement: "When reading the CEO's message, I felt angry, annoyed, and irritated." I created a composite variable after running reliability tests (M = 4.64, SD = 2.47, α = .91).

Anxiety. Anxiety was operationalized as the emotion experienced by the internal publics when they feel overwhelmed by the MTurk crisis due to the immediate danger facing them, yet they do not know how to cope with the issue. To measure anxiety, I asked the participants to read the CEO's message and respond to the statement: "When reading the CEO's message, I felt: anxious, nervous, and worried." The three items had a good reliability and therefore combined them to create a composite variable (M = 3.98, SD = 2.96, α = .93).

Fright. Fright was operationalized as the emotion that internal publics experience when feeling uncertain and afraid of their future as MTurk workers due to the uncertain and existential threat caused by the bots' crisis. To measure fright, I asked the participants to read the CEO's message and respond to the statement: "When reading the CEO's message, I felt fearful, scared, and afraid." The fright items were combined together to one scale after running reliability tests (M = 3.50, SD = 1.89, α = .95).

Control Variable

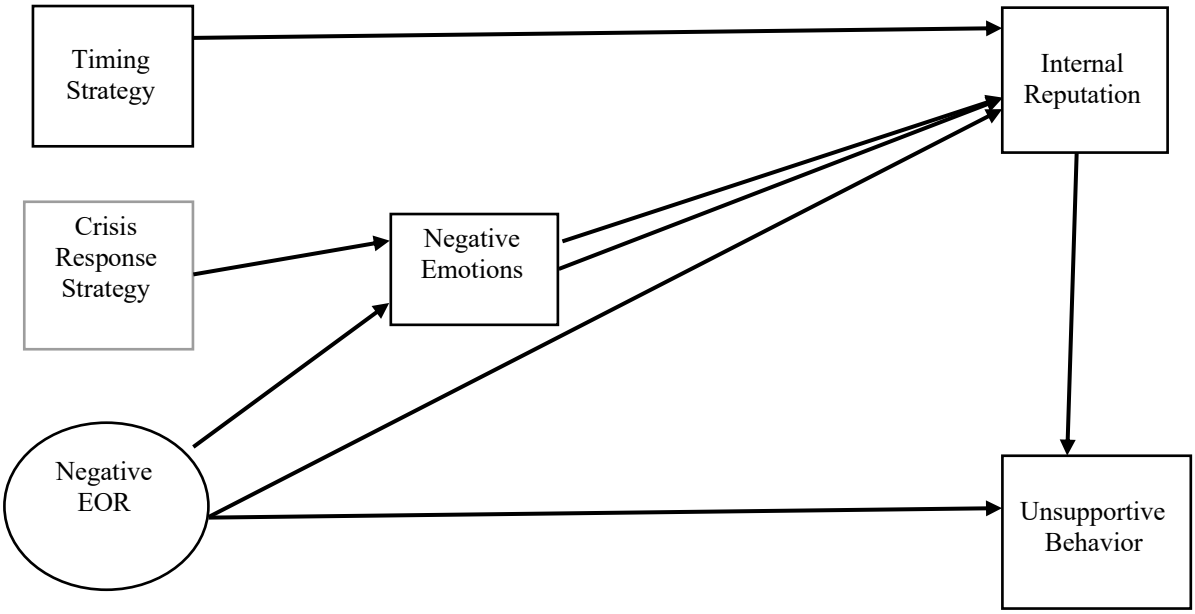
There was one control variable in this study: crisis history.

Crisis History. Crisis history was operationalized as internal publics' experience with an event similar to the bots' crisis described in the study. It was measured using the question: "In the last five years, has your current organization had direct experience with a similar incident as the crisis just described?" This question was measured on a 7-point scale (1-NO, to 7-YES, M = 9.10, SD = 1.28). Crisis history was controlled because SCCT literature suggests that crisis history exacerbates a crisis

situation, which affects how publics perceive a crisis and evaluate the organization's reputation (Coombs, 2007).

Figure 1

The Measurement Model of the Path Analysis Showing the Variables that were Estimated in Lavaan



CHAPTER V: RESULTS

Manipulation Check Results

A total of 150 participants were recruited for the pretest. Just like in the main study, the participants for pretest were recruited through MTurk. The pretest was necessary to determine if the manipulation of the crisis response strategies and timing worked. During data screening and cleaning procedures, 29 participants were dropped from the study, leaving 121 participants (N = 121). These were participants who failed the screening question (n= 10) and those who spent less than 30 seconds on a page (n = 11), since this implied that they did not read the stimuli before starting to respond to the questions (each of the crisis scenario and answers took approximately two minutes to read). Additionally, participants who took less than ten seconds from the first click of the survey to the last click (n = 8) were excluded from the analysis. The reasoning here was that with the 17 questions in the randomized survey, spending less than 10 seconds would imply that the participants did not read the questions. The final sample size used for the pretest was 121.

The mean age of the 121 participants was 41.68 (SD = 12.54), of which 50.4% and 49.6% identified as male and female respectively. Majority of the participants identified themselves as Caucasian/White (72.7%, n = 88), while 12.4 (n = 15) were Black/African American, 10.7% (n = 13) Asian, 2.5% (n = 3) Hispanic, and 1.7% (n =20) were in another racial category. Most of the participants identified themselves as never married (43%, n = 52), followed by married (41.3%, n = 50), divorced (11.6%, n = 14),

widowed (2.5%, $n = 3$), widowed (1.7%, $n = 2$). Educationally, the greatest number of participants had a bachelor's degree (49.6%, $n = 60$), professional degree (15.7%, $n = 19$), some college (14%, $n = 17$), two-year-degree (11.6%, $n = 14$), high school diploma (7.4%, $n = 7$), less than high school (0.8%, $n = 1$), and doctorate (0.8%, $n = 1$). Income ranged from less than $10,000 to more than $150,000.

The first manipulation check that I ran was for the timing of the crisis message. Here, I asked the participants to respond to the statement "Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos was the first person (before the media) to break the news about the bots' incident" (for stealing thunder) and "AP broke the news about the crisis and Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos only responded to the media report" (for thunder). To test the difference between the two conditions, I ran an independent samples *t*-test. The manipulation for timing was successful. The independent samples *t*-test revealed a significant difference in the question about the first party to break the news of the crisis, with the mean of the participants in the stealing thunder condition being higher than that of those assigned to the thunder condition, $t(119) = 4.26$, $p < .001$, ($M_{stealingthunder} = 3.76$, $M_{thunder} = 2.45$), CI [.69, 1.90]. In the thunder condition, the participants stated that they first learned about the crisis from Associated Press (AP), with Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos only responding to the AP's message (e.g., AP broke the news about the crisis and Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos only responded to the media report), $t(90.91) = 5.59$, $p = < .001$, $M_{thunder} = 4.32$, $M_{stealingthunder} = 2.74$, CI [1.14, 2.02].

The second manipulation check involved the crisis response strategy that the CEO used. To check if the response strategy manipulation was successful, I also used a *t*-test.

Participants who were in the defensive condition interpreted the CEO's message as an attempt to blame the crisis on factors outside the organization's control (e.g., The CEO did not apologize for the crisis and tried to blame circumstances outside the organization for the issue involving bots) $t(119) = 9.87$, $p = <.001$, $M_{defensive} = 5.22$, $M_{rebuilding} = 2.41$, CI [1.37, 2.24]. Similarly, participants who read the rebuilding message had significantly higher mean score than the ones who read a defensive message (e.g., The CEO apologized and accepted responsibility for the issue involving bots), $t(88.74) = 8.94$, $p < .001$, $M_{rebuilding} = 6.08$, $M_{defensive} = 3.80$, CI [1.78, 2.79].

Once the manipulation had been ascertained, I ran the main test with 465 participants ($N = 465$). Participants used in the pretest were excluded from participating in the main test by using MTurk's Worker IDs. MTurk workers have unique numbers (IDs) that are used to identify them. By copying these unique numbers to the "Exclude Workers" box, I was able to exclude the participants who took part in the pre-test from the main test. To further check for duplicates, I ran the Workers ID from both the pretest and the main test data through Excel by combining a list of all the Worker IDs into one Excel sheet and checking for duplicates. Just like in the pretest, the participants read the consent form and were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. First, I measured crisis history by asking the participants about their experience with an event similar to the bots' crisis described in the study. After that, the participants responded to questions measuring the dependent variables such as internal reputation, unsupportive behavioral intention, and negative emotions. Lastly, the participants answered demographic questions such as their age, income, and marital status.

A total of 500 participants were recruited for the main test. The same data screening and cleaning procedures undertaken during the pretest were done with the data for the main test. During data screening and cleaning procedures, 35 participants (n = 35) were dropped from the study, leaving 465 participants (N = 465). These were participants who failed the screening question (n= 19), those who spent less than 30 seconds on a page (n = 9), and those who took less than ten seconds from the first click of the survey to the last click (n = 7). Spending less than 30 seconds on a page implied that one did not read the stimuli before starting to respond to the questions as each crisis scenario and answers took about two minutes to read. Most of the participants who failed the screening question ended up taking less than 10 minutes, which was the average time that MTurk recorded per participant. The randomized survey had 17 questions and spending less than 10 seconds from the first click to the last click implied that one did not read the questions.

The final sample used for analysis consisted of 465 participants (N = 465) of which 52.7% (n = 245) were male and 46.9% (n = 218) were female. The participants' ages ranged from 19 to 80 years old, with a mean age 42.17 (SD = 12.81). Participants mostly identified themselves as Caucasian/White (72.7%, n = 338), followed by Black/African American (11.2%, n = 52), Asian (10.5%, n = 49), Hispanic (3.7%, n = 17), other (1.9%, n = 9). Most of the participants identified themselves as married (53.8%, n = 250), followed by never married (34%, n = 158), divorced (7.7%, n = 36), separated (2.6%, n = 12), and widowed (1.9%, n = 9), Educationally, the greatest number of participants had a bachelor's degree (49.7%, n = 231), followed by professional

degree (19.1%, *n* = 89), some college (11%, *n* = 51), two-year-degree (10.1%, *n* = 47), high school diploma (8.8%, *n* = 41), doctorate (0.9%, *n* =4), and less than high school (0.2%, *n* = 2). Income ranged from less than $10,000 to more than $150,000.

Dimensionality Checks

Prior to testing the hypotheses, this study conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for variables measured by multi-items using Lavaan in R statistical software (Rossell, 2012). The CFA was run to examine the dimensionality of the multiple items underlying a single construct and therefore verify the factor structure of the four multi-item variables (NEOR, negative emotions, internal reputation, and unsupportive behavioral intention in order to validate a theoretical factor structure (Netemeyer et al., 2003). Using the Hu and Bentler (1999) cut-off criteria, the CFA model had an acceptable model fit, $\chi 2(362) = 761.87$, $p < .001$, robust root mean square error of approximation (rRMSEA) = 0.06, 90% CI= [0.05, .07], robust comparative fit index (rCFI) = .96, robust non-normed fit index/Tucker–Lewis index (rNNFI/TLI) = .96, and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .05. An adequate model fit needs to have CFI of at least .95, TLI of .95, RMSEA of not higher than .08, and a SRMR of not higher than .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Little, 2013).

However, inspection of the local model fit (residual matrix, and modification indices such as cross-loadings and correlated residuals), revealed a potential problem in two items used to measure unsupportive behavior and dissatisfaction. These items were highly correlated and increased the chances of having multicollinearity problem (Franke, 2010). I, therefore, removed the items, given the undesirability of multicollinearity.

Furthermore, one of the items used to measure reputation positively and significantly loaded on the control dominance. Furthermore, an item used to measure dissatisfaction also loaded positively and significantly on dissolution. This cross-loading was interpreted to mean that people who are dissatisfied with their organization do not feel like their opinion matters in organizational decision-making process. Because of the undesirability of double-barreled items, I removed the cross-loading items. These modification indices improved the model fit, $\chi2(276) = 415.27$, $p < .001$, robust root mean square error of approximation (rRMSEA) = .04, 90% CI= [0.03, .05], robust comparative fit index (CFI) = .99, robust non-normed fit index/Tucker–Lewis index (rNNFI/TLI) = .99, and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .03. Upon further inspection of the residual matrix and modification indices, I did not see additional areas of local misfit.

Table 2

Fit Indices of Confirmatory Factor Analyses of the Model for Variables Measured using Multi Items

	χ2	df	TLI	rCFI	rRMSEA	SRMR
Model 1	761.87***	362	.96	.96	.06 [.05, .07]	.06
Model 2	415.27***	276	.99	.99	.04 [.03, .05].	.03

In addition to the global model fit indices, this study checked the composite reliability and the construct validity of all measurement items. Construct validity refers to the degree to which the test used measures what it claims to measure (Polit & Beck, 2012). For construct validity, this study assessed standardized loading estimates,

convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Convergent validity is the degree to which two construct measures that should logically be related are actually related (Kline 2015). Convergent validity was assessed using composite reliability (construct reliability using the Cronbach's alpha), average variance extracted (AVE), and factor loadings (Netemeyer et al., 2003). Average Variance Extracted refers to the measure of the amount of variance in indicator variables that is captured by a construct in comparison to the amount of variance due to measurement error. For a model to achieve construct validity, the standardized loading estimates must be greater than .50, with statistical significance. Also, the AVE for each variable should be greater than .05. Also, the AVE for each variable should be greater than the average shared squared variance (ASV), where AVE is the mean of the squared correlation coefficients between latent constructs (Hair et al., 2019).

From the model, the latent variables had statistically significant standardized loading estimates that were also greater than 0.50. Each variable had AVE greater than 0.50 (NEOR: 0.82, internal reputation: 0.84, and unsupportive behavioral intention: 0.75), and therefore the model achieved convergent validity. Additionally, the ASV values were less than the AVE values for each variable (ASV values: NEOR: 0.46 internal reputation: 0.33, and unsupportive behavioral intention: 0.39). Therefore, the model achieved discriminant validity. Composite reliability (CR) was successfully established, and all measurement items had good reliability that was above .70 (NEOR: 0.96, internal reputation: 0.96, and unsupportive behavioral intention: 0.90) (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 3

Standardized Loading Estimates, Construct Validity, and Composite Reliability for NEOR, Internal Reputation, and Unsupportive Behavioral Intentions

Survey Item	*β*	*a*
Dissatisfaction		
DS1: My relationship with this corporation is bad.	.80	.95
DS2: I feel that the relationship with this corporation is a disadvantage.		.81
DS3: I do not have good feelings about the relationship I have with this company.		.83
DS4: I am disappointed about the relationship with this corporation.		.81
DS5: Relationship with this company is not as good as I had expected.		.80
Distrust		

DT1: This corporation puts more weight on its private interests than on public interests.	.87	.94
DT2: This corporation often deceives publics intentionally.		.87
DT3: This corporation seems to hide its problems.		.81
DT4: This company has the tendency to blame consumers or the environment when the problem or fault is its own.		.79
DT5: This corporation does not seem to practice transparent management.		.89
Control Dominance		
CD1: This corporation ignores opinions of employees like me.	.81	.95
CD2: This corporation does not like having the opinions of people like me to be considered in its decision-making processes.		.81
CD3: This corporation does not try to be in the shoes of people like me.		.76
CD4: This corporation seems to not care about the opinions of people like me.		.79
CD5: This corporation does not give people like me a chance to voice an opinion.		.80
Dissolution		
DSN1: I plan to end my relationship with the company.	.72	.96
DSN2: I do not want to continue the relationship with this company anymore.		.75
DSN3: I regret the relationship with this company.		.79
DSN4: I will discontinue the relationship with this company soon.		.75
DSN5: If possible, I want to end the relationship with this corporation right now.		.76
Eigenvalue:		12. 21
% of Variance.		61.03%
Cronbach's Alpha		.97
Composite Reliability (CR):		.96
Average Variance Extracted (AVE):		.82
Average Shared Variance (ASV):		.46
Internal Reputation		
IR1: MTurk is concerned with the well-being of its employees.	.95	.94
IR2: MTurk is basically DISHONEST.	.93	

IR3: I do NOT trust MTurk to tell the truth about this incident.	.84	
IR4: Under most circumstances, I would be likely to believe What MTurk says.	.79	
Cronbach's Alpha		.94
Composite Reliability (CR):		.96
Average Variance Extracted (AVE):		.84
Average Shared Variance (ASV):		.33
Unsupportive Behavior		
UB1: I will talk to people about the problems of our services and products.	.78	.91
UB2: I will agree with people who criticize my organization.	.80	
UB3: If asked to do something to help the company, I would NOT do it because it will involve extra responsibility.	.82	
UB4: If asked to do something to help the company, I would NOT do it because this might involve some risk.		.82
UB5: If asked to do something to help the company, I would NOT do it because it might bring me some discomfort.	.81	
Cronbach's Alpha	.91	
Composite Reliability (CR):	.96	
Average Variance Extracted (AVE):	.75	
Average Shared Variance (ASV):	.39	

Hypotheses Testing

To test the hypotheses, both hierarchical multiple regression and path analysis using Lavaan package in R software were used (Rossell, 2012). Before running the regression analysis, I recoded two categorical variables from the experimental conditions, crisis response strategy (rebuilding = 1, defensive = 0) and timing strategy (stealing thunder = 1, thunder = 0), as dichotomous variables that were used in the regression

analysis. Also, I calculated a mean-centered variable for the continuous independent variable NEOR to eliminate any nonessential multicollinearity since interaction terms were included in the regression models (Cohen et al., 2013). Multicollinearity reduces the power of significance tests in regression analysis as variables tend to cancel each other mathematically (Hayes, 2015). I checked if there was any violation of multicollinearity and homoscedasticity using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance (TOL). There was no overlap as all tolerance statistics were above the .25 threshold and none of the VIF statistics was above the 4.0 threshold. The VIF value should not exceed 4.0 and the TOL value should be above .25 (Hair et al., 2019).

The centering process created two interaction terms: NEOR*response strategy and NEOR*timing strategy. All independent variables (NEOR, response strategy, and timing strategy), the control variable (crisis history), and the interaction terms (NEOR*response strategy and NEOR*timing strategy) were entered in the regression model of both internal reputation and unsupportive behavioral intention. Results from the regression analysis indicated that 76.7% of the variance in the internal reputation could be predicted by the independent variables, $R^2_{adj} = .77$, $F(6, 452) = 251.68$, $p < .001$. Likewise, 52.9% of the variance in unsupportive behavioral intention could be predicted by the independent variables, $R^2_{adj} = .53$, $F(6, 452) = 86.84$, $p < .001$ (See Table 4).

The first hypothesis (H_1) predicted that negative employee-organization relationships (NEOR) will be positively associated with both internal reputation and unsupportive behavioral intention (H_{1a} and H_{1b}). The results of the regression analysis indicate that NEOR was a significant predictor of both internal reputation ($\beta = -0.86$, $t = -$

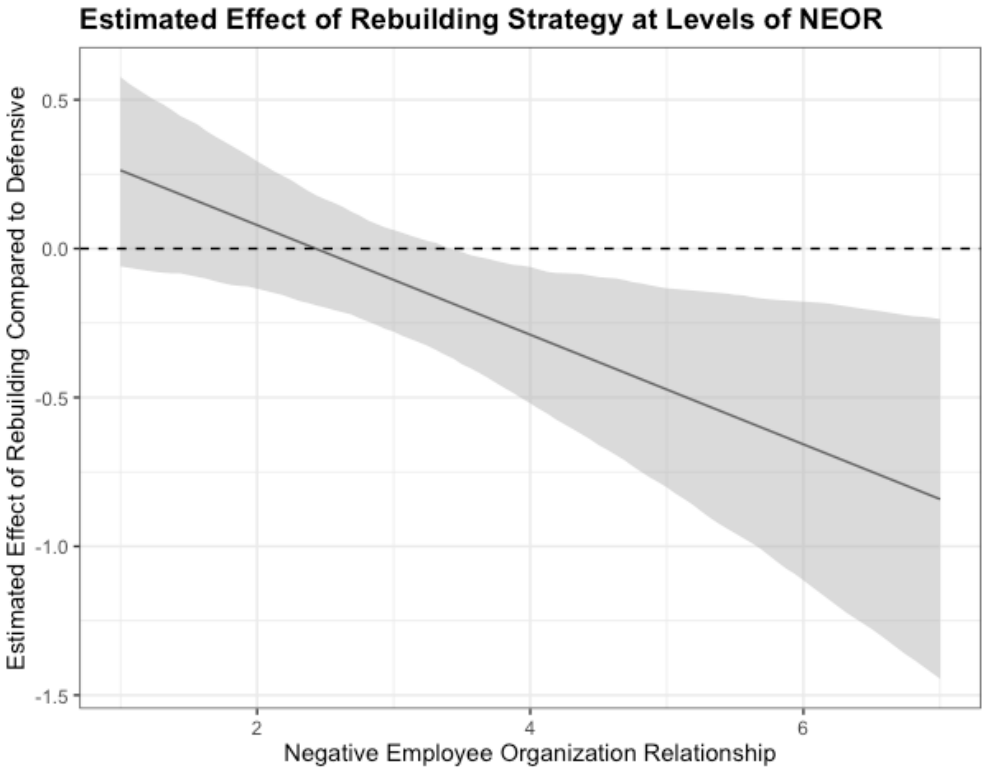
21.17, $p < .001$), and unsupportive behavioral intention ($\beta = 0.81$, $t = 13.92$, $p < .001$), while controlling for the effects of the other independent variables. This implies that for every 1-unit increase in negative employee-organization relationships (NEOR), internal reputation decreased by -.96 units, and unwillingness to support the organization during a crisis increased by .91 units. Neither variable produced TOL or VIF statistics that indicated collinearity. Therefore, H_{1a} and H_{1b} were supported. Beta weights for the predictor variable can be found in Table 4.

The second hypothesis (H_2) predicted that rebuilding strategies will be more positively associated with (H_{2a}) internal reputation and negatively associated with unsupportive behavior (H_{2b}). Results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis indicated that rebuilding strategies was not statistically significant for both internal reputation ($\beta = -.03$, $t = -1.16$, $p = .25$) and unsupportive behavior ($\beta = -.02$, $t = -.46$, $p = .65$). Therefore, H_{2a} and H_{2b} were not supported.

The third hypothesis (H_3) predicted that the effect of NEOR on both internal reputation and unsupportive behavior will depend on the response strategy (H_{3a} and H_{3b}). The interaction term of NEOR*Strategy (rebuilding strategies) yielded significant results for unsupportive behavior ($\beta = -.11$, $t = -2.40$, $p = 0.02$) but not for internal reputation ($\beta = -.03$, $t = -.98$, $p = .33$) ($\beta = -.03$, $t = -.98$, $p = .33$). Figure 2 shows the interaction effect. The unstandardized beta (-.81) could be interpreted to mean that the effect of response goes down .18 unit for every one unit increase in NEOR. Beta weights for the predictor variable can be found in Table 4. Therefore, H_3 was partially supported.

Figure 2

Interaction Effect of Crisis Response Strategy (Rebuilding vs. Defensive) X Negative Employee-Organization Relationships (NEORs) on Employee Unsupportive Behavior



The fourth hypothesis (H_4) predicted that stealing thunder will be more positively associated with (H_{4a}) internal reputation and (H_{4b}) and negatively associated with unsupportive behavior than thunder. Results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis indicated that the stealing thunder strategy was not statistically significant for both internal reputation (β = -.02, t = .87, p = .39) and unsupportive behavior (β = -.01, t

= -.21, p = .69). Therefore, H_{4a} and H_{4b} were not supported. Beta weights for the predictor variable can be found in Table 4.

The fifth hypothesis (H_5) predicted that timing strategy will moderate the effects of NEOR on both internal reputation (H_{5a}) and unsupportive behavior (H_{5b}). Results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis indicated that the interaction term of NEOR*Timing (thunder) did not yield significant results for both internal reputation (β = .01, t = -0.03, p = .98) and unsupportive behavior intention (β = 0. 01, t = 0.09, p = .93). Therefore, H_{5a} and H_{5b} were not supported.

Table 4

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for the Associations between Independent Variables and Internal Crisis Outcomes (Internal Reputation and Unsupportive Behavioral Intentions)

	Internal Reputation				Unsupportive Behavior			
Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*t*	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*t*
NEOR	-.96	.05	-.86***	-21.17	.91	.07	.81***	13.93
Response Strategy	-.08	.07	-.03	-1.16	-.05	.10	-.02	-.46
Timing Strategy	.06	.06	.02	.87	-.04	.09	-.01	-.40
NEOR*Response	-.05	.05	-.03	-.98	-.18	.07	-.11*	-2.40
NEOR*Timing	.01	.05	-.03	.03	.01	.07	.01	.09
Crisis History	.02	.02	.03	1.1	-.01	.03	-.02	-.42
R2	.77				.81			
F	106.86				104.39			

The sixth hypothesis (H_6) predicted that four negative emotions (anger, sadness, fright, and anxiety) will mediate the effects of negative EOR and crisis response strategies on ($H6_a$) internal reputation and ($H6_b$) unsupportive behavioral intention. To test how negative emotions mediated the effects of NEOR, crisis message, and timing strategies on internal reputation and unsupportive behavioral intention, path analysis using SEM was conducted through Lavaan in R statistical software (Rossell, 2012). I included all four emotions (sadness, anger, anxiety, and fright) in the path analysis. I estimated the path using the bootstrapping technique ($N = 5000$) recommended over Sobel Test in mediation analysis (Hayes, 2009; Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Zhao et al., 2010). The Sobel Test requires an assumption of normality for the indirect effect sampling distribution and this distribution is mostly positively skewed (not normal) especially in cases where small samples are used. On the other hand, bootstrapping, a non-parametric procedure, does not require *a priori* assumption about the distribution's shape since it is empirically estimated using a resampling procedure hence more ideal for testing the significance of the indirect effects compared to the Sobel Test (Hayes, 2009). In this study, bootstrapping was used to validate how negative emotions mediated the relationship between exogenous variables (NEOR and response strategies) and the endogenous variables (crisis outcomes-negative reputation and unsupportive behavior).

The Hu and Bentler (1999) cut-off criteria were used to assess the global model fit, and the model achieved an adequate model fit, $\chi2(258) = 365.77$, $p < .001$, robust root mean square error of approximation (rRMSEA) = .04, 90% CI= [0.03, .004], robust comparative fit index (CFI) = .98, robust non-normed fit index/Tucker–Lewis index

(rNNFI/TLI) = .98, and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .03. However, inspection of the local model fit (residual matrix, and modification indices such as cross-loadings and correlated residuals), revealed a potential cross-loading problem in two items used to measure distrust and dissatisfaction. This cross-loading was interpreted to mean that people who do not trust their organization to tell the truth during a crisis are also dissatisfied with their relationship with the organization. Because of the undesirability of double-barreled items, I removed the items that were cross-loading. These modification indices improved the model fit, $\chi2(189) = 238.36$, $p < .001$, robust root mean square error of approximation (rRMSEA) = .03, 90% CI= [0.02, .04], robust comparative fit index (CFI) = .99, robust non-normed fit index/Tucker–Lewis index (rNNFI/TLI) = .99, and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .02. Upon further inspection of the residual matrix and modification indices, I did not see additional areas of local misfit.

Table 5

Fit Indices of Path Analysis of the Moderating Role of Negative Emotions on the Relationship between Negative Employee-Organization Relationships, Crisis Response Strategies, and Timing Strategies on Crisis Outcomes (Internal Reputation and Unsupportive Behavior

	χ2	df	TLI	rCFI	rRMSEA	SRMR
Model 3	365.77***	258	.98	.98	.04 [.03, .04]	.06
Model 4	415.27***	189	.99	.99	.04 [.03, .05].	.02

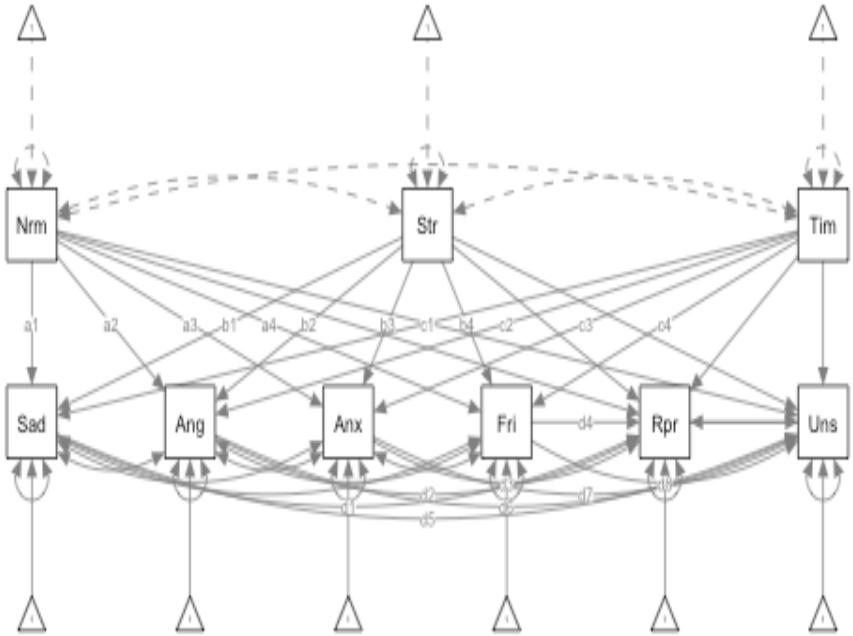
In the path model, three negative emotions (anger, anxiety, and fright) mediated the effects of NEOR on internal reputation. For the indirect effects, anger mediated the relationship between NEOR and reputation negatively (β = -0.16, p < 0.01, 95% CI [-0.02, -0.01]. Likewise, anxiety had a negative mediation effect on the relationship between NEOR and internal reputation (β = -0.01, p < 0.01, 95% CI [-0.03, -0.01]. On the other hand, fright mediated the relationship between NEOR and internal reputation, positively, β = 0.48, p < 0.001, 95% CI [0.02, 0.05]. None of the four emotions mediated the relationship between NEOR and unsupportive behavioral intentions. Additionally, the four emotions did not have a mediating role on the effects of timing and response strategies on both internal reputation and unsupportive behavior.

For the direct effects between NEOR and the negative emotions, the four emotions had positive relationships with NEOR. Sadness had a positive relationship with NEOR, β = 0.16, p < 0.01, 95% CI [0.13, 0.55]; so was anger, NEOR, β = 0.21, p < 0.001, 95% CI [0.26, 0.69], anxiety, β = 0.17, p < 0.01, 95% CI [0.17, 0.62], and fright, β = 0.17, p < 0.001, 95% CI [0.17, 0.60].

For the direct effects of the exogenous variables on the endogenous variables, NEOR had negative effects on internal reputation, β = -0.16, p < 0.01, 95% CI [-0.04, -0.01]. The direct effects of the timing strategy (β = -0.15, p = 0.52, 95% CI [-0.04, -0.01] and crisis response strategy (β = 0.02, p = 0.71, 95% CI [-0.21, 0.26] did not yield significant results. Internal reputation had a negative and a direct effect on unsupportive behavioral intentions, (β = -0.20, p < 0.001, 95% CI [-0.09, -0.03]. Timing strategy did not affect both reputation and unsupportive behavioral intention directly.

Figure 3

The Mediating Effect of Negative Emotions on the Relationship between NEOR, Timing, Crisis Response Strategy on Internal Reputation and Unsupportive Behavior



CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this study was to examine how crisis communication can be undertaken in an internal setting involving employees. This was done to fill the gap in crisis communication and enhance theoretical advancement in crisis communication research. Of interest was the question whether crisis response strategies and crisis timing strategies could moderate the effects of negative employee-organization relationships (NEOR). In other words, do the effects NEOR on both internal reputation and unsupportive behavior depend on crisis response strategy and the timing of the crisis communication message? Also, this study sought to explore whether negative emotions could mediate the relationship between NEOR and internal reputation as well as employees' unsupportive behavior.

This research is extremely relevant in today's corporate world because of what has been considered as an overemphasis on external publics as the sole victims of a crisis while ignoring important players in the crisis process who meet the criterion of primary publics when it comes to crisis communication. Primary publics are defined as people who are "most affected by the crisis, have shared common interest with an organization, and have long-term interests, and influences, on the organization's reputation and operation" (Jin et al., 2010). Despite internal publics (employees) being at the center of a crisis, the role that they play in mitigating a crisis has been remarkably absent in the crisis communication literature. Additionally, despite growth in relationship literature, research involving internal publics and their relationships with the organization has been

conspicuously missing. Therefore, through an experiment, this study was designed to provide empirical evidence on the importance of internal publics in crisis mitigation and how negative relationships affect internal reputation and unsupportive behavior during a crisis.

Summary of the Findings

The first hypothesis tested the main question of this study; whether negative employee-organization relationships (NEOR) would be negatively associated with internal reputation and positively associated with unsupportive behavior. Consistent with extant research, the current study found that negative EOR had a negative association with internal reputation and a positive relationship with unsupportive behavioral intentions when controlling for the impact of other factors such as crisis history, crisis response strategies, and timing strategies (Kim et al., 2019). This implies that when employees have negative relationships with the organization, they tend to rate the internal reputation badly and increase their unwillingness to support an organization when it is in a crisis. In other words, during a crisis, if the existing employee-organization relationships have been bad, employees will not believe the information coming from the organization regarding the crisis. At the same time, employees will think that the organization does not care about their wellbeing. Employees will be hesitant to assist the organization in resolving the crisis if the organization asks them to take on additional responsibilities that could help them resolve the crisis faster.

The second hypothesis posited that when rebuilding strategies are used, internal publics will tend to rate internal reputation high and decrease their intentions not to

support the organization to mitigate a crisis. The analysis did not yield support for this hypothesis. This implies that internal publics are not concerned about the response strategies that an organization adopts.

When response strategies were used as a moderator for the relationship between negative EOR and on both internal reputation and unsupportive behavior (third hypothesis), the hypothesis was partially supported, as NEOR negatively moderated the effects of crisis response strategies on unsupportive behavioral intentions. In other words, as NEOR goes up, the effect of rebuilding on unsupportive behavior gets lower. That is, at a low level of NEOR, rebuilding strategies have an effect on unsupportive behavior but not as much as you get to high levels of NEOR. Therefore, rebuilding strategies are not better than defensive strategies for people with low NEOR, but as NEOR increases, using rebuilding strategies is better than using defensive strategies. This means that apologizing to internal publics and offering some form of compensation to them could cultivate more supportive role during a crisis. An apology leads to forgiveness and when internal publics forgive the organization, they are more likely to reduce their unsupportive behavioral intentions. Likewise, an apology could make internal publics "give the organization the benefit of the doubt" (Coombs, 2015, p. 125; Lichtenfeld et al., 2019). As the results suggest, the effect of rebuilding strategies on the relationship between NEOR and unsupportive behavior could mean that whenever the relationships between the organization and its employees are bad, using rebuilding strategies is more important than using defensive strategies. Defensive strategies could backfire for an organization when employees have a negative relationship with the organization (see Figure 2).

The fourth hypothesis posited that stealing thunder will yield a better internal reputation than using thunder during a crisis. This hypothesis was not supported. This could be interpreted to mean that employees do not care if the organization is the first one to break the news about a crisis or they read about the crisis in the media, especially when the relationships between the employees and the organization are not good. Closely tied to the fourth hypothesis was the fifth one that tested the moderating role of timing (stealing thunder) on internal reputation and unsupportive behavior. This hypothesis was not supported too, and this could be interpreted to imply that the internal publics are not concerned about the timing of the information about a crisis as long as the employee-organization relationships are bad.

The last hypothesis tested the mediating effects of four negative emotions, anger, anxiety, fright, and sadness. Of the four emotions, sadness did not mediate the relationship between NEOR and both internal reputation and unsupportive behavioral intentions. On the other hand, anger and anxiety mediated the relationship between NEOR and internal reputation, with the two emotions having significant and negative beta coefficients (anger: β = -0.16, anxiety: β = -0.30). This implies that when internal publics have NEOR, they tend to rate internal reputation badly, but this effect can be explained by the mediating influence of anger and anxiety. Fright had a positive mediating effect on internal reputation, and this could be interpreted to mean when there is something negative that is associated with an organization, such as a crisis, the employees also feel bad about the people fear about a crisis, they are likely to rate the reputation high. This is because the entity that used to make them feel happy is under

threat, is now making them feel bad. This could be because of fear of losing their jobs, as crises bring a lot of uncertainties and when compensation is involved, some people may fear for their jobs.

Theoretical Implications

According to the existing crisis communication research, combining two or more theories in a study will aid in the development of a more comprehensive crisis communication theory (Coombs, 2013; Kim et al., 2019). Due to limited research in internal crisis communication, this study integrated key concepts from several theories that have been explored in crisis communication and public relations literature involving external publics and applied them to an internal context. These concepts are derived from relationship literature, SCCT, and the ICM model. The concepts derived from relationship literature suggest that public relations should be based on generating mutual understanding and benefits between an organization and its publics by managing the organization-public relationships (Park & Reber, 2011). From the SCCT, this study used concepts such as crisis response strategies and crisis timing (Coombs, 2007). Lastly, the ICM model presented an opportunity to integrate the four negative emotions identified by the theorists into the current study (Jin et al., 2012). These theoretical frameworks have been heavily studied using external publics and applying the frameworks in an internal context was the next logical step in crisis communication research. By doing so, the current study helps to answer the question whether internal publics are part of the larger publics affected by a crisis. In addition, exploring crisis communication from an internal context signifies the direction that the field is taking in theoretical development and

shows that the existing gap in literature can be filled by scholarship involving internal publics. This makes employees part of the primary publics and therefore it is critical to understand the dynamics of effective internal crisis communication. Also, the findings that are contradictory to extant literature should contribute to a better understanding of how a crisis should be managed and what organizations in crises can do to foster their internal reputation and minimize employees' unsupportive behavior.

One of the key findings from this study is that relationships matter in a crisis and they outweigh crisis history. The findings underscore the importance of building positive EORs. The results reveal strong negative effects of NEOR on reputation and strong positive effects on unsupportive behavioral intentions while controlling for the effects of prior crisis history. The results suggest that cultivating positive employee-organization relationships is more important than timing of the communication message and response strategies that an organization uses during a crisis. According to SCCT literature, crisis history and prior relationship history can escalate the effects of a crisis (Coombs, 2007; Kim, 2017). However, based on the results of the current study, negative EOR can have damaging effects on internal reputation and can lead to employees' unsupportive behavioral intentions, crisis history notwithstanding. This is consistent with existing research, which shows that EOR has a significant direct impact on organizational reputation and employee conduct during and after a crisis (Kim et al., 2019). Likewise, extant literature suggests that primary publics would evaluate an organization negatively and be unwilling to extend support to the organization when it has not been treating its publics well. Employees are an example of primary publics (Jin et al., 2012). This is also

in line with relationship literature that posits that good relationships act as a buffer (have halo effect on the publics) and bad relationships act as a boomerang (Velcro effect) making primary publics unwilling to support the organization (Coombs & Holladay, 2006; Kim, 2017). Taken together, these findings suggest that crisis communication researchers should consider adding relationship history and quality in their research.

This study found support for previous research on the importance of rebuilding strategies. These positive effects of rebuilding strategies have been tested across different crisis types such as product-harm and moral-harm crises (Hegner et al., 2018), food poisoning (Crijns et al., 2017), car recall (Choi & Chung, 2013), and product tampering (Claeys et al., 2010). In the current study, when the CEO of the organization apologized, employees were willing to support the organization during the crisis than when the CEO offered excuses and shifted blame to external causes of the crisis. This is in line with previous that suggests that rebuilding strategies are more effective in managing a crisis than defensive strategies (Choi & Chung, 2013; Claeys et al., 2010; Crijns et al., 2017; Hegner et al., 2018). SCCT research suggests that using rebuilding strategies could help an organization avoid negative behavioral outcomes such as negative megaphoning (negative word-of-mouth) among the internal publics.

This study did not find support for extant research that stealing thunder is an effective strategy in generating support from publics (Beldad et al., 2018; Fennis & Stroebe, 2014). This could be attributed to the fact that the current study used an internal crisis and employees who had negative relationships with the organization. Being the first people to experience a crisis, employees can have insider information that the crisis is

about to happen and therefore stealing thunder from them would not be different from when they receive the crisis news from a third party (thunder). Due to negative employee-organization relationships, the employees may decide not to offer any support during the crisis. This is an area that needs to be explored further to help understand how timing of the crisis communication message could help organizations to manage a crisis internally.

Additionally, the current study contributed to the existing literature on emotional crisis communication by exploring the mediating role of negative emotions on the relationship between negative EOR and crisis response strategies on internal reputation and unsupportive behavioral intentions. This implies that the ICM model can be applied in internal crisis communication contexts to explain crisis-related reputation in the model's quadrants. As the model suggests, conative coping, or the ability to manage a crisis by the drive that the publics must can and must do something to handle the crisis, implies that there will be behavioral outcomes that the publics adapt to handle the crisis (Jin, 2010). However, the current study did not find support for unsupportive behavioral intentions as the publics' negative emotions only influenced internal reputation. This finding is consistent with previous literature on internal crisis communication but not in line with the propositions of the ICM model (Jin et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2019). Such a finding implies that more research in emotional crisis communication involving internal publics is required.

The four emotions had direct positive effects with negative EOR and this implies that negative EOR makes employees sad, angry, anxious, and afraid. Anxiety and anger

are two negative emotions that exacerbate the negative effects of NEOR on internal reputation. The mediating effects of anger on the relationship between NEOR and reputation imply that internal publics are more likely to evaluate an organization negatively when the employee-organization relationships are poor. In other words, as employees get angry with an organization, they are more likely to rate it unfavorably. The same case applies to anxiety– as employees get anxious about the organization, they are more likely to rate it disapprovingly.

These two emotions can be explained using psychology literature on emotions. For anger, the core relational theme is a demanding offense against "me" or "mine" (Lazarus, 1991, p. 22). During a crisis like this one that affected internal publics, the publics may have felt that the crisis was a demanding offense that made them feel disrespected due to MTurk's failure to live up to its expectations. As a way of coping with disrespect, primary publics tend to blame the organization for failing to detect and prevent the crisis from happening (Jin et al., 2012; Lindner, 2006). For the publics to cope with anger, they may decide to attack the organization, for instance, by rating its reputation unfavorably. As the findings regarding rebuilding strategies found, the publics' anger dissipates when the organization apologizes and offers compensation to the victims of the crisis (Jin et al., 2012).

The same case applies to anxiety, which played a mediating role between NEOR and internal reputation in the current study. The findings of this study suggest that negative EOR escalates anxiety among the employees. The core relational theme of anxiety is experiencing an immediate, concrete, and overwhelming danger (Lazarus,

1991). A crisis falls into this category as it an immediate and overwhelming danger. Some scholars argue that anxiety is the default emotion during a crisis, in that every crisis makes the publics anxious as they are not sure of what is going on (Jin et al., 2012). A crisis makes publics feel overwhelmed and they start looking for ways to cope with the current uncertainty (Jin et al., 2012). In the current study, poor quality EOR makes employees feel overwhelmed by the crisis and this makes the employees evaluate the organizational reputation unfavorably. That is when employees experience negative EOR, they would lack faith in their organization's ability to manage the crisis. This feeling makes employees anxious, and, in return, they rate the organization's reputation low.

On the other hand, fright had positive mediating effects on the relationship between NEOR and internal reputation. This could be explained by looking at the core theme of fright which is when one is facing an uncertain and existential threat that could cause harm (Jin et al., 2012; Lazarus, 1991). The uncertainty brought forth by a crisis makes the employees fear being associated with the organization that is in a crisis. Moreover, the employees could fear that being associated with an organization that is in crisis could affect them negatively to the point of losing their jobs. However, this idea is subject to further probing.

Practical Implications

The findings of the current study provide valuable insights that public relations professionals can adapt to deal with a crisis involving internal publics. One of the challenges that crisis communication researchers have faced for years is the inability to

integrate research findings into the field of crisis management. Crisis communication practitioners are interested in knowing how research findings can translate into the practice and be shared among different publics (Claeys & Opgenhaffen, 2016). The present study fuses several concepts that exist in separate contexts. This presents practitioners with an integrated approach to understanding how to mitigate a crisis internally by focusing on the timing of the communication message, the response strategies to adopt, and the dangers of having negative relationships with internal publics.

Additionally, the current study emphasizes the importance of cultivating and maintaining positive OER as this can help maintain a good internal reputation during a crisis. Therefore, crisis communication practitioners need to establish and maintain good relationships with the internal publics. Crises are unpredictable events that have the potential to damage organizational reputation. However, if crisis managers establish good relationships with the employees, the employees might be instrumental in managing the crisis by acting as microboundary spanners who can scout the environment for threats and act as pro bono ambassadors who can do positive megaphoning for the organization. This finding is also consistent with previous research that suggests that employees with good relationships with the organization are likely to support and evaluate the organization positively during and after the crisis (Ki & Brown, 2013; Kim et al., 2019; Park & Reber, 2011). The reverse is also true and therefore, crisis managers should strategize how they will build positive internal relationships with the internal publics.

Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations in this study that can form as springboard for future research. First, the study used only one crisis type, a crisis involving bots that led to the production of fraudulent results. Future research could compare several crisis types across different industries and see how they will affect internal publics' perception of the organization's internal reputation and (un)supportive behavior. Second, severity matters in a crisis (Zhou & Ki, 2018). Crisis severity is "the amount of damage generated by a crisis including financial, human, and environmental damage" (Coombs & Holladay, 2002, p. 169). Future research could test the same variables but include the severity variable (either high severity where death is involved or low severity where people did not die). Third, the study did not include account acceptance or the degree that participants believe that a crisis response strategy adopted by an organization in crisis is appropriate and how that affects internal reputation (Coombs & Holladay, 2008). Thus, future research could include account acceptance and investigate if acceptance matters based on the response strategy adopted.

Fourth, crisis communication researchers argue there is a need for a framework that addresses different cultural dimensions in crisis communication (Zhou & Shin, 2017). The current study used American population. Thus, future research could compare different crises across different cultures as this would help in addressing crises from a cultural point of view. For instance, a comparison could be between individualistic and collectivistic cultures where different crises are involved. Fifth, the current study only addressed the negative relationship outcomes of control dominance, distrust,

dissatisfaction, and dissolution. Although one study has already addressed the positive relationship outcomes of satisfaction, control mutuality, trust, and commitment, future research could compare the two relationship outcomes to fully understand the role of relationships in internal crisis communication.

Fifth, this study did not include the role of leadership during a crisis. As extant research suggests, leadership, or the process of influencing others, matters in crisis communication (Coombs, 2020; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). Leaders also help in managing the emotions of the publics as this helps in creating proximate outcomes such as positive affective tone and ultimate outcomes such as reduced stress (Sommer et al., 2015). The connection between managers and the employees influences employees' outcomes. Therefore, future research could explore how various types of leadership affect both internal reputation and employees' unsupportive behavior.

Sixth, although using MTurk workers helped with ecological validity of the study, the current study should be explicated using an organization which does not have gig workers and has permanent employees to see if the results will be the same. Most of the employees who take surveys on MTurk are gig workers who have other jobs and only use MTurk to supplement their income (Keith et al., 2019). Therefore, future research could address this issue by exploring permanent employees in an organization.

Lastly, the current study did not address the concept of coping and how internal publics cope with a crisis. Coping refers to the mental and behavioral processes that people initiate when faced with an emotionally charged situation as a way of bringing forth more stable emotional states that reduce the levels of stress (Duhachek, 2005). In

the appraisal theory of emotions, coping plays a critical role (Jin, 2010). Therefore, future research could address how internal publics cope with a crisis and what coping strategies they adopt to reduce the stress levels that are brought forth by a crisis.

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APPENDIX A- EXPERIMENTAL STIMULI

Please read the following message and answer the questions that follow:

Condition I: Rebuilding and stealing thunder

Today Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos announced that the company's popular market research tool MTurk has been overwhelmed by an army of bots. Software-generated accounts have been posing as humans to complete the various tasks posted to the MTurk site. These fraudulent survey responses have undermined faith in the quality of information generated by MTurk and pose a serious threat to the popular service.

In a statement, Bezos admitted that Amazon bears responsibility. "The issue with bots was caused by a failure in management. We take responsibility for this issue. We would like to apologize for the considerable damage done to our valued customers.

Bezos said he decided to make this announcement because "people need to know that the product they received may not have been up to our quality standards." He was the first to report about the bot issue, stating that he believes Amazon owes this information to MTurk's customers promptly. "They should be hearing this from me, not from the press," said Bezos.

The issue with the bots has gone unchecked for an extended period of time to the severe detriment of some of MTurk's important clients. Some said they are planning to sue MTurk for damages. Amazon has been forced to refund large amounts of money and these lawsuits are believed to threaten the economic viability of MTurk.

Prominent academic research has also been affected. Published studies using data collected from MTurk have been retracted and the authors of these studies say their careers have been put in serious jeopardy. David Adams, an assistant professor of psychology at Princeton, had relied heavily on MTurk for his field-leading work on cognitive biases. He said six of his most prominent studies have been retracted, an outcome that increases the probability of a negative performance review resulting in denial of tenure. If denied tenure, Adams would lose his position at Princeton.

Bezos added: "Our computer engineers are working round the clock, checking the accuracy of the data that was collected, and the possibility of offshore survey warehouses that may have led to the invalid responses. We will contact all clients who may have been affected by the bots and offer refunds and gift cards. I will not settle until this issue is resolved once and for all."

Bezos had previously announced that he will be stepping down as Amazon CEO at the end of the current fiscal quarter. Insiders say he hopes to resolve the bot issue before stepping down to ensure a smooth transition.

Condition II: Defensive and stealing thunder

Today Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos announced that the company's popular market research tool MTurk has been overwhelmed by an army of bots. Software-generated accounts have been posing as humans to complete the various tasks posted to the MTurk site. These fraudulent survey responses have undermined faith in the quality of information generated by MTurk and pose a serious threat to the popular service.

In a statement, Bezos evaded responsibility, saying: “This problem would only occur under extraordinary circumstances. The issue was caused by malware that hit our super computers. Unfortunately, the situation was out of our hands. There was nothing we could have done; it was a breakdown of the technical system.”

The issue with the bots has gone unchecked for an extended period of time to the severe detriment of some of MTurk’s important clients. Some said they are planning to sue MTurk for damages. Amazon has been forced to refund large amounts of money and these lawsuits are believed to threaten the economic viability of MTurk.

Prominent academic research has also been affected. Published studies using data collected from MTurk have been retracted and the authors of these studies say their careers have been put in serious jeopardy. David Adams, an assistant professor of psychology at Princeton, had relied heavily on MTurk for his field-leading work on cognitive biases. He said six of his most prominent studies have been retracted, an outcome that increases the probability of a negative performance review resulting in denial of tenure. If denied tenure, Adams would lose his position at Princeton.

Bezos added: “Our computer engineers are working round the clock, checking the accuracy of the data that was collected, and the possibility of offshore survey warehouses that may have led to the invalid responses. We will contact all clients who may have been affected by the bots’ issue.”

Bezos had previously announced that he will be stepping down as Amazon CEO at the end of the current fiscal quarter. Insiders are not sure if he will resolve the bot issue before stepping down to ensure a smooth transition.

Condition III: Rebuilding and thunder

The AP is reporting that Amazon's popular market research tool MTurk has been overwhelmed by an army of bots. Software-generated accounts have been posing as humans to complete the various tasks posted to the MTurk site. These fraudulent survey responses have undermined faith in the quality of information generated by MTurk and pose a serious threat to the popular service. Amazon has just responded to the news report. Because of the issue, MTurk has decided to conduct a thorough investigation.

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In a statement, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos admitted that Amazon bears responsibility. "The issue with bots was caused by a failure in management. We take responsibility for this issue. We would like to apologize for the considerable damage done to our valued customers."

Bezos added: “Our computer engineers are working round the clock, checking the accuracy of the data that was collected, and the possibility of offshore survey warehouses that may have led to the invalid responses. We will contact all clients who may have been affected by the bots and offer refunds and gift cards. I will not settle until this issue is resolved once and for all.”

Bezos had previously announced that he will be stepping down as Amazon CEO at the end of the current fiscal quarter. Insiders say he hopes to resolve the bot issue before stepping down to ensure a smooth transition.

Condition IV: Defensive and Thunder

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APPENDIX B- SCALES

Screening Question

To answer the screening questions, participants answered the question: What was the crisis that you just read about?

1. The crisis involved a plane accident
2. The crisis involved bots affecting the credibility of survey responses

Manipulation Check Questions

To answer the manipulation questions, the participants indicated on a seven-point scale the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the each of the following statements (1: Strongly disagree; 7: Strongly agree):

1. The issue of bots affecting MTurk was voluntarily announced by the Amazon's CEO Jeff Bezos.
2. The issue of bots affecting MTurk was discovered by the media first, and Amazon's CEO Jeff Bezos only responded to the media report.
3. The CEO apologized and took responsibility for the issue involving bots.
4. The CEO neither apologized nor took responsibility and tried to blame circumstances outside the organization for the issue involving bots.

Crisis History

To answer the crisis history question, participants responded to the following question on a 5-point scale (1: Definitely not, 7: Definitely yes)

In the last five years, have you had direct experience with a similar incident as the crisis just described?

Negative Emotions

To answer the negative emotions questions, the participants indicated on a 10-point scale the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the each of the following statements (1: None at all, 10: To an extreme amount).

When reading the article, how would you describe your emotional state regarding how the CEO talked about the bots' incident?

When reading the message, I felt…

1. Sad
2. Downhearted
3. Unhappy
4. Angry
5. Annoyed
6. Irritated
7. Anxious
8. Nervous
9. Worried
10. Fearful
11. Scared
12. Afraid

Negative Employee-Organization Relationships (NEOR)

To answer the NEOR questions, the participants indicated on a seven-point scale the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the each of the following statements (1: Strongly disagree; 7: Strongly agree):

a) Dissatisfaction

DS1: My relationship with this corporation is bad.

DS2: I feel that the relationship with this corporation is a disadvantage.

DS3: I don't have good feelings about the relationship I have with this company.

DS4: I am disappointed about the relationship with this corporation.

DS5: Relationship with this company is not as good as I had expected.

b) Distrust

DT1: This corporation puts more weight on its private interests than on public interests.

DT2: This corporation often deceives publics intentionally.

DT3: This corporation seems to hide its problems.

DT4: This company has the tendency to blame consumers or the environment when the problem or fault is its own.

DT5: This corporation does not seem to practice transparent management.

c) Control Dominance

CD1: This corporation ignores opinions of consumers like me.

CD2: This corporation does not like having the opinions of people like me to be considered in its decision-making processes.

CD3: This corporation does not try to be in the shoes of people like me.

CD4: This corporation seems to not care about the opinions of people like me.

CD5: This corporation does not give people like me a chance to voice an opinion.

d) Dissolution

DNS1: I plan to end my relationship with the company.

DNS2: I don't want to continue the relationship with this company anymore.

DNS3: I regret the relationship with this company.

DNS4: I will discontinue the relationship with this company soon.

DNS5: If possible, I want to end the relationship with this corporation right now.

Internal Reputation

To answer the internal reputation questions, the participants indicated on a seven-point scale the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the each of the following statements (1: Strongly disagree; 7: Strongly agree):

IR1: MTurk is concerned with the well-being of its employees.

IR2: MTurk is basically DISHONEST.

IR3: I do NOT trust MTurk to tell the truth about this incident.

IR4: Under most circumstances, I would be likely to believe what the MTurk says.

Unsupportive Behavior

To answer the unsupportive behavior questions, the participants indicated on a seven-point scale the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the each of the following statements (1: Strongly disagree; 7: Strongly agree):

NM1: I will talk to people about the problems of our services and products.

NM2: I will agree with people who criticize my organization.

NM3: If asked to do something to help the company, I would NOT do it because it will involve extra responsibility.

NM4: If asked to do something to help the company, I would NOT do it because this might involve some risk.

NM5: If asked to do something to help the company, I would NOT do it because it might bring me some discomfort.

Demographic Questions

To answer the demographic questions, the participants chose one of the listed answers, except for age where they had to type a number.

a) **What is your age? (Please type a number below)**

_____

b) **What is your ethnicity? (Please select one)**
   1. White
   2. Hispanic
   3. Black or African American
   4. Asian
   5. Other

c) **What is your marital status? (Please select one)**
   1. Married
   2. Widowed
   3. Divorced
   4. Separated
   5. Never married

d) **What is your gender? (Please select one)**
   1. Male
   2. Female
   3. Other

e) **What is your level of education? (Please select one)**
   1. Less than high school
   2. High school graduate
   3. Some college
   4. 2-year degree
   5. 4-year degree
   6. Professional degree
   7. Doctorate

f) What is your annual household income? (Please select one)

1. Less than $10,000
2. $10,000 - $19,999
3. $20,000 - $29,999
4. $30,000 - $39,999
5. $40,000 - $49,999
6. $50,000 - $59,999
7. $60,000 - $69,999
8. $70,000 - $79,999
9. $80,000 - $89,999
10. $90,000 - $99,999
11. $100,000 - $149,999
12. More than $150,000

APPENDIX C- INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Investigator's Name: JAMES NDONE

Study Title: THE EFFECTS OF NEGATIVE EMPLOYEE-ORGANIZATION RELATIONSHIPS ON INTERNAL CRISIS OUTCOMES

You are invited to take part in this research study. This consent form tells you why we are doing the study, what will happen if you join the study, and other important information about the study. Please take as much time as you need to read this consent form. You can discuss it with your family, friends, or personal doctor. If there is anything you do not understand, please ask us to explain. Then you can decide if you want to take part in the study or not.

The Principal Investigator is James Ndone. This experimental study investigates the effects of negative employee-organization relationships and the timing of the communication message on negative organizational reputation and unsupportive behavior (negative megaphoning). Also, the study seeks to understand how internal publics (employees) react to a crisis and the emotions they express during a crisis. By doing so, this study adds to literature on the effectiveness of emotions in internal crisis communication. Taking part in a research study is voluntary. You decide if you want to take part, and you can stop taking part at any time. You can refuse to answer any question you do not wish to answer. Your responses are completely anonymous. To ensure your anonymity, we will not reveal anything else that identifies any participant or track your IP address.

We believe there are minimal risks associated with participating in this project. If you would like to see a professional to discuss any discomfort, at your expense, contact a counselor of your choice. You will be required to complete a survey. You will receive compensation ($1) for this study via Amazon's Mechanical Turk or MTurk. Your participation will help extend our understanding of emotions and their involvement in crisis communication.

Please direct any questions and/or comments to me (jnrqd@mail.missouri.edu) or to Dr. Glen Cameron (camerong@missouri.edu). For questions regarding your rights as a research participant you are encouraged to contact the University of Missouri's IRB through 573-882-3181.

If you want to talk privately about your rights or any issues related to your participation in this study, you can contact University of Missouri Research Participant Advocacy by calling 888-280-5002 (a free call), or emailing MUResearchRPA@missouri.edu

Respectfully,

James Ndone

Ph.D. Candidate

University of Missouri, Journalism.

__ Yes, I am at least 18 and agree to participate __ No, I do not wish to participate, or I am not 18

VITA

James Ndone was born in Kenya. He specializes in crisis communication, exploring the role of emotions and the timing of crisis communication messages and how that affects post-crisis reputation and organizational forgiveness. He is a quantitative researcher with an emphasis on experimental research designs to understand stakeholders' emotions and how they affect organizations during crises.

He plans to continue in this research agenda by exploring how crises affect employees who have been "a forgotten public" when it comes to crisis communication research. In doing so, he hopes to understand how negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, sadness, and fright are manifested among employees during a crisis and how an organization's use of stealing thunder and thunder impacts how employees react and behave during a crisis. He received his bachelor's degree in communication and journalism (first-class honors) from Moi University (Kenya).

Before attending graduate school, he worked in both journalism and public relations in Kenya. His job as a public relations manager at Mission for Essential Drugs and Supplies (MEDS) made him develop an interest in both health communication and crisis communication. Ndone received his master's degree (MA) in communication from Illinois State University and worked there as an instructor for a year before joining the Missouri School of Journalism for doctoral studies. Ndone has taught classes that show the intersection between journalism and PR. He is bilingual and can speak and write both English and Kiswahili.