

Gen Z's Ethical Approaches in Crisis Communication on Social Media: Evidence of Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Digitalization implies accelerating the spread of information, including the information in crisis communication. Crisis information in social media is crucial in the formation of knowledge and change of attitude, particularly for Generation Z, characterized as digital natives and representing the future public face of organizations. This study aims to investigate the ethical perspectives of Generation Z in Indonesia on crisis information on social media. The creation of information as a form of crisis communication was a crucial activity because the image and reputation of the organization were at stake at the time. The method used in this study is a case study that allows researchers to gather varied data. The study uses a qualitative approach by using a collective interview with 15 students in the Z-gen age range. All informants in the study are students with public relations interference in different academic years. The findings indicate that objectivity is a key ethical consideration for Gen Z in shaping information during crisis communication. Additionally, Gen Z empathizes with the public's demand for transparent and accurate information as a manifestation of an organization's commitment during crisis periods. Furthermore, Gen Z emphasizes the necessity for regularly updated information throughout all crisis phases, viewing it as a demonstration of good governance and organizational transparency. In conclusion, the research offers recommendations underscoring the importance of constructing pertinent information across all media channels managed by organizations, aligning with the communication style, and characteristics of each stakeholder.

Keywords: *Gen Z, crisis communication, ethical approaches, social media, Indonesia.*

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between Generation Z and communication technology has been extensively explored in research (Niaz Ahmed 2019; Asmarantik et al. 2022, Firamadhina & Krisnani 2021; Anom et al., 2022). Similarly, the relevance of Generation Z to the current work environment has been studied; however, there is a limited examination of the ethical perspective of Generation Z as a generation termed "digital natives" (Szymkowiak et al., 2021) in information consumption, particularly in the context of organizational crisis communication. Generation Z's interaction patterns are inextricably linked to the Internet, social networks, and mobile technologies (Lim et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2023), making it crucial to investigate their ethical considerations on information consumption.

The rapid and instantaneous nature of the digital environment has contributed to Generation Z developing a more demanding character compared to previous generations. Studies have identified their expectation for interactivity and a preference for convenient and expeditious online transactions and information retrieval. Notably, Generation Z was the first cohort to access smartphones, social media, and other technologies at a relatively young age compared to their predecessors. Examining Generation Z's smartphone and social media

usage in Indonesia, data from the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency in 2023 indicates that Generation Z constitutes 22 percent of the population, about 60 million people. This underscores the substantial representation of the younger generation, with more than a quarter of the Indonesian population falling within the Gen Z demographic. The age categorization of Generation Z is illustrated in the following timeline of generations (Latkovikj & Popovska, 2020).

Table 1: Timeline of generations

Veteran generation	1925-1946
Baby boom generation	1946-960
X generation	1960-1980
Y generation	1980-1995
Z generation	1995-2010
Alfa generation	2010+

In terms of information credibility, several studies indicate that Generation Z places greater trust in information sourced from fellow social media users compared to information generated by companies, a distinction from the trust patterns observed in Generation X and Generation Y (Herrando et al., 2019). A previous research revealed that the consumption of information about an organization's brand by Generation Z is positively correlated with their confidence in information shared by other entities, including public authorities and NGOs (Reinikainen et al., 2020). This implies that Generation Z's trust in information from a brand is significantly influenced by corroborating sources. The study deliberately collected data from Indonesian students in the 20-23 age range, specifically those in their second to fourth years of study, majoring in public relations. This cohort is well-versed in organizational communication management for image and reputation maintenance.

The vulnerability of an organization's image and reputation during crises is highlighted as unforeseeable events that can impact any entity (Coombs & Holladay, 2010). A comprehensive understanding of crises involves recognizing that the chaos, disruption, and renewal brought about by organizational crises are fundamental aspects of the organizational life cycle (Ulmer et al., 2019). In this context, social media platforms play a transformative role in public discourse by serving as outlets for news dissemination, policy discussions, debates, opportunities to participate, and facilitating connections based on the interests and needs of their users (Yeh et al., 2022). The utilization of social media emerges as an effective strategy for actively monitoring and participating in public discourse, offering a platform for participatory and stakeholder-based crisis communication. This signifies a fundamental shift in the composition of messages compared to traditional communication mediums such as mainstream media (Witt, & Baird, 2018).

Furthermore, the question of the study is how Gen Z's ethical approach or perspective on selecting information related to crisis communication is carried out by organizations on social media. Numerous research, particularly in Indonesia (Kristia et al., 2023; Hanifah, 2023), have only examined the entertainment, lifestyle, and leisure aspects of Gen Z and their ethical interaction with social media. Thus, this study was conducted to identify the gap in the previous research and explore another side of Gen Z's interaction with social media as well. The objective of this study is to comprehend the unique ethical approach of Generation Z in crisis communication on social media, as stated in the problem description above. To match

the objectives of this research, this study uses interviews with exploratory questions aimed at multiple Gen Z persons who have an educational background in public relations.

Consequently, the construction of information in crisis communication becomes a compelling aspect to explore, aiming to formulate announcements that align with the needs of Generation Z as both stakeholders and the future public of the organization. Organizations are required to strategically and ethically navigate the realm of social media, employing communication strategies that facilitate authentic dialogues with their stakeholders, including Gen Z (Hung-Baesecke & Bowen, cited in Austin & Jin, 2017).

LITERATURE REVIEW

a. *Organizational Crisis Communication and Information Creation*

Crises have the potential to inflict physical, emotional, and financial harm on stakeholders, posing risks and negative impacts on diverse groups such as members of society, employees, customers, suppliers, and shareholders. Moreover, crises can detrimentally affect the organization's image, services, products, or overall reputation, jeopardizing its public relations and the sustainability of its performance and existence. The response and communication strategies employed by organizations during a crisis are pivotal in shaping the public's expectations. Crisis communication involves two fundamental components; crisis management knowledge and the management of stakeholder reactions. Managing a crisis necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the situation, utilizing knowledge to conduct a thorough analysis of information (Heath & O'Hair, 2010).

Organizational crises have the potential to capture public attention and become fodder for media coverage, both through mass media including online media and social media channels as well, which implies requirements about the ethics of publicity (Wijaya et al., 2022). Previous research highlights the evolving role of social media in journalism, where it has become a key reference for news among journalists. Their findings indicate that nine out of ten journalists use social media as a source of news, with the majority considering it a secondary source. This research underscores that social media has evolved into an integral component of the work of online media journalists in Indonesia (Rosemarwati & Lindawati, 2019). It not only facilitates connectivity and interaction but also serves as a significant source of information that actively shapes public discourse (Priyowidodo et al., 2024).

b. *Social Media as an Organizational Social Network*

Crisis management entails a holistic approach to public relations (PR) practices, encompassing various elements such as problem monitoring, risk assessment and communication, crisis planning, as well as the dissemination of post-crisis information, management, and image recovery (Indrayani, 2022). In the realm of crisis communication, organizations are advised to engage in information exchange among stakeholders to mitigate the risk of a communication crisis (Cannaerts, 2021).

This proactive communication strategy aims to prevent misunderstandings and foster transparency during challenging times. It is crucial, especially considering that organizational crises have the potential to become news in both traditional media and social media. Social media, in particular, has evolved into a dynamic platform for news dissemination. The changing media landscape has seen a shift wherein news content from traditional sources is

shared widely on social media platforms, contributing to the rapid exchange of information and interaction in crises.

The global trend in recent years involves the instantaneous distribution of news content through social media platforms, which has become the standard practice for traditional media. Newspapers, traditionally pivotal in producing and disseminating news content, have undergone significant transformation due to the prevalent sharing and consumption practices on social media platforms (Zhang & Li, 2020).

Stakeholders perceive social media as more credible than traditional media. This underscores the critical importance of ensuring clarity and transparency in the information disseminated through social media channels, particularly during crises (Kutoglu Kuruç & Opiyo, 2020). Social media as a powerful tool for organizations to detect, identify, and manage crises effectively, emphasizing its role in sending timely updates, providing interactive communication tools, and serving as a means to engage with stakeholders. Audiences' reliance on social media during crises is rooted in its capacity to offer emotional support, real-time information updates, and access to information not available through other channels (Maal & Wilson-North, 2019). Consequently, social networking sites have evolved into essential channels for crisis communication between public relations and stakeholders.

c. *Gen Z and Information Consumption*

Research on media consumption patterns among the Z-generation in Indonesia is still in its early stages, with sporadic and limited studies. Previous research was conducted a comparison between the consumption patterns of the Z-generation, Millennials, and Baby Boomers in the town of Bandar Lampung revealed that the Z-generation exhibited the highest rates of usage and preference for digital technology, the internet, and social media (Suciska & Gunawibawa, 2020).

Another study explored the consumption patterns of the Indonesian Generation Z during the COVID-19 pandemic. Surveying 326 Z-generation participants, the research discovered that while the rate of consumption and distribution of news about COVID-19 was relatively low, the level of social media access was high, exceeding four hours per day (Suwana et al., 2020; Michelle & Susilo, 2021). This indicates a notable reliance on social media platforms for information dissemination and engagement, especially during the challenging circumstances brought about by the pandemic (Blandi et al., 2022).

Drawing on literature in the realms of media consumption, news consumerism, and audience studies, a comprehensive investigation was conducted into the consumption patterns and trends of the Indonesian Generation Z in accessing news and media. The study involved respondents from Gen Z within the age range of 15-25 years, spanning various regions of Indonesia. Surveying a total of 1177 respondents (with a margin of error of 3 percent), the research revealed that the majority of Gen Z in Indonesia spends more than 8 hours a day accessing various media, with social media emerging as the primary gateway for discovering news and information.

Among the key findings, media credibility and the quality of news content emerged as primary considerations for Generation Z when selecting news sources. Gen Z also exhibited a preference for comprehensive news content over fast but incomplete news articles. The consumption patterns of digital media and online news among Gen Z in Indonesia

underscored a notable duration of access, exceeding 8 hours per day. Social media, particularly, was highlighted as the predominant channel for information access, with 71% of respondents indicating its significance. Notably, Generation Z's initial patterns of news consumption were characterized as incidental, where exposure to news occurred through incidental news exposure. The study emphasized that Gen Z prioritizes content quality and media credibility when choosing media sources (Asmarantika et al., 2022), emphasizing a preference for news aligned with their interests. Soft news, entertainment, lifestyle-related news, and economic and business news content were identified as widely consumed categories, especially among the older age range within Generation Z.

d. *Ethical Issues of Crisis Communication in The Indonesian Context*

The handling of crisis communication requires an understanding of the socio-cultural context in which the crisis occurs. Since the ethical issues that arise in crisis communication are highly varied and contextual, particularly in countries with diverse cultures and social classes like Indonesia, formulating strategies for crisis communication must consider various approaches, such as demographic, psychographic, and geographic factors (Atasever et al., 2023). Moreover, ethical issues in crisis communication also heavily depend on the various expectations, values, and needs of the public. In Indonesia, the presence of diverse generations also impacts trust in institutions and the availability of transparent and credible information. This diversity demands that the construction of messages in crisis communication be sensitive and adaptive to the potential reactions from various social and cultural groups.

A crucial ethical issue in Indonesia today is the potential emergence of misinformation or fake news on social media during a crisis. Studies on misinformation and fake news among the youth population in Indonesia have become a dominant topic in many scientific publications (Evita et al., 2023; Abdillah & Handoko Putro, 2022). According to a previous study conducted, there was a significant vulnerability among young people, particularly those in the late teenage to early twenties age range, to the influence of misinformation. In this context, individual-level literacy related to information selection skills becomes a determining variable, as it affects their ability to distinguish between true information and misleading content. The research also confirms that young people find social media to be a breeding ground for fake news (Effendi, 2023), leading them to question the information they encounter on social media.

METHODOLOGY

The research method is a case study approach. Data collection involved the examination of reflections from 15 students majoring in Strategic Communication. These students documented their reflections on information sourced from social media and media reports. The data analysis process included the selection of pertinent data, the classification of themes, and the subsequent analysis and interpretation of the collected data.

Specifically, the study focused on the Generation Z cohort, involving 15 students enrolled in the four-to-eight-semester range of the Strategic Communication program within the Communication Science Department. The criteria for selecting informants in this study included students who have completed at least their first year of college, as they are expected

to have adequate knowledge about crisis communication. The informants also needed to use several social media platforms and exhibit behaviours of consuming information on social media. This selection process was further based on their active participation in discussions during case-based learning in class, reflecting their engagement with current information.

The choice of these 15 informants was deliberate, as they possess knowledge regarding the news production process and publication activities conducted by organizations. Additionally, these informants exhibit an understanding of the behavioural tendencies of the Generation Z demographic in social media interaction. The research thus benefits from insights drawn from individuals with expertise in both news production processes and the targeted demographic's engagement with social media. The interview questions were developed based on the literature and previous research on ethical communication practices, crisis communication strategies, and the specific characteristics and preferences of Generation Z. The primary sources include a foundational point of view about crisis communication (Coombs & Holladay, 2010; Manoli & Anagnostou, 2023), and recent studies on social media use and ethical considerations among Generation Z (Weiqi et al., 2024).

This study, despite interviewing a limited sample of 15 participants, adheres to the principles of qualitative research, with a primary emphasis on achieving data saturation (Cresswell, 2013).

This study conducted semi-structured interviews with informants and posed several questions, including:

1. What social media channels do you utilize to find information?
2. Which one, in your opinion, best meets your information needs on a company-wide issue? Why?
3. In your opinion, which outlet is more objective in communicating corporate crises? Why?
4. What information do you expect from the organization's official media during a crisis? Why?

According to the case study, it is appropriate when the key issues of research are how or why, and the research focuses on contemporary phenomena in the context of real-life scenarios (Yin, 2017). Therefore, the questions in the study emphasized the logic and behavior of Gen Z as a stakeholder and also a digital native in digging for crisis information on social media.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study reveals that the informants commonly utilize more than three social media platforms to acquire information and engage in discussions with their peers. The following table outlines the social media preferences identified among the Generation Z cohort:

Table 2: Social media platforms used by Generation Z

No	Informant	Age	Social media used frequently (amount)
1.	MA, sophomore	20 y.o	Instagram, TikTok, Line, WhatsApp, YouTube, Pinterest (6)
2.	RA, senior	22 y.o	Instagram, Threads, WhatsApp, Line, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube (6)
3.	SL, sophomore	20 y.o	Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Line (7)
4.	PAD, senior	22 y.o	WhatsApp, Line, Signal, Telegram, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok (7)
5.	GK, senior	20 y.o	Line, WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok (4)
6.	KY, junior	21 y.o	Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, YouTube (5)
7.	RAK, junior	21 y.o	Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Twitter (6)

8.	RA, sophomore	20 y.o	Line, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, Thread, Facebook, Telegram, Snapchat, Kakao Talk, YouTube (11)
9.	SJ, sophomore	20 y.o	Instagram, TikTok, Line, WhatsApp (4)
10.	VR, senior	23 y.o	Instagram, LinkedIn, Threads, WhatsApp, Line (5)
11.	GPL, senior	22 y.o	Instagram, TikTok, Telegram, Facebook, Twitter, Discord, YouTube, WhatsApp, Line (9)
12.	VA, sophomore	20 y.o	Instagram, WhatsApp, Line, TikTok, Twitter, YouTube (6)
13.	NJ, sophomore	20 y.o	WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Line, Twitter (X), Discord (7)
14.	JS, senior	22 y.o	Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, WhatsApp, Line, Telegram, Facebook, LinkedIn (8)
15.	JY, sophomore	20 y.o	Line, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, YouTube (7)

This research highlights that, despite having access to multiple social media platforms, Gen Z tends to be more actively engaged on the same platforms as their social groups. Through interviews with 15 informants, the study yielded interesting findings. Among the informants, seven expressed a preference for using the social media platforms owned by a company or organization as a reference to obtain information during times of crisis. Simultaneously, seven other informants opted for public or non-owned social media platforms as their preferred source of information reference. Notably, only one person indicated a choice to utilize two sources of information to gather insights during an organizational crisis. The details of these preferences are outlined in the table below:

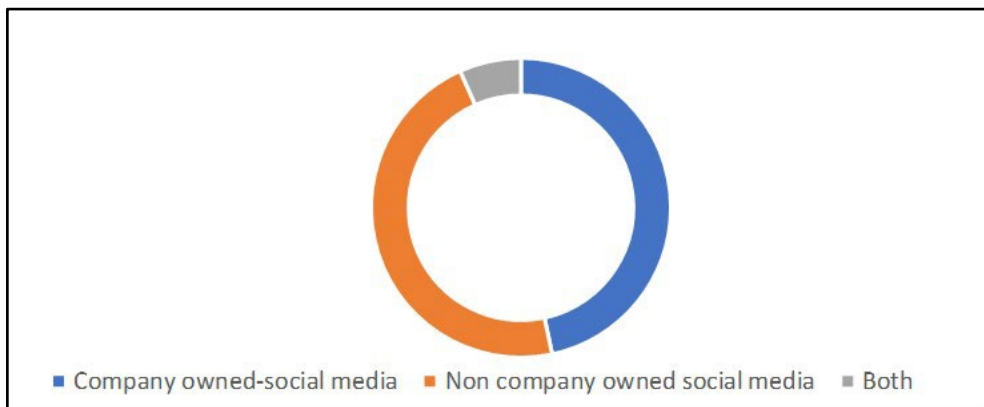


Figure 1: Social media platform employed by Generation Z for acquiring updated crisis information

The findings of this research indicate that Indonesian Gen Z individuals with a background in Public Relations (PR) education exhibit a nuanced approach to information consumption during organizational crises. On one hand, these individuals tend to trust information disseminated by organizations on their social media platforms, perceiving it as a manifestation of the organization's commitment to good governance and moral values in crisis communication, fostering trust among stakeholders. On the other hand, a noteworthy portion of Gen Z individuals, despite their PR education, maintain a critical stance. They prefer to consume information from non-organizational social media platforms, reflecting a commitment to critical thinking and information evaluation within their well-educated social group.

This critical attitude, observed among some members of Gen Z, signifies a valuable competency in information discernment, a trait fostered by their education. One informant even emphasized the importance of cross-checking information from both social media platforms owned by organizations and those that are not organization-owned. Contrary to previous research that suggested a lack of competence in information filtering among Gen Z, these findings reveal a more complex picture. The ethical considerations observed in crisis communication, influenced by the educational background of the Z gene, suggest that factors such as education can play a pivotal role in shaping how information is created, interpreted, and disseminated. Higher education programs contribute to the development of ethical understanding and critical reflection, fostering awareness of the impact of information on communities and the broader public. This process aids Gen Z in recognizing the ethical challenges inherent in information dissemination.

Ultimately, Gen Z engages with information in a dialogical manner, utilizing it to comprehend their social reality. This includes a process of searching for truth and validating their understanding of social reality (Taber et al., 2023), highlighting the multifaceted ways in which Gen Z approaches and engages with information during organizational crises (Raslie & Ting, 2021). The emphasis on timeliness aligns with their expectations for organizations to keep them informed and engaged during evolving situations. The findings provided insights into their values and expectations in crisis communication scenarios as would be discussed below.

Information Objectivity

This study found that the primary ethical approach emphasized in crisis communication on social media by informants is Information Objectivity. This approach is considered highly relevant in maintaining public integrity and trust while disseminating information during a crisis. Organizations are required to provide accurate, unbiased, and balanced information in this context. Information objectivity in crises is crucial to avoid the spread of misinformation and to enhance public trust. Moreover, the public tends to trust sources with credibility, which serves as a goodwill factor for more effective crisis communication.

The comprehension of organizational crises within the Gen Z framework is fraught with dilemmas. Despite being privy to the intricate details of a crisis, organizations frequently grapple with the challenge of delivering authentic reports. Announcements are often crafted solely to safeguard the organization's image and reputation, raising questions about the sincerity of the information presented. Informants argue that organizations, armed with a deeper understanding of the crisis, should ideally function as reliable sources with higher credibility than social media platforms, which have the potential to disseminate misinformation. However, the reality is that organizations often fall short of delivering objective information during times of crisis, contributing to a perceived lack of transparency and honesty. This dichotomy between the expectation of organizational credibility and the perceived shortcomings in crisis communication underscores the complex and intricate nature of managing information during challenging periods. As articulated by the informants, their statements were as follows,

Corporate social media will create a good image for the company, whereas the general/non-corporate media will present the issue of what it is, so the public/open social media owned by the company tends to be more objective than the company's social media (Informant RA).

General social media that is not owned by a company is likely to be more likely to spread the news of the crisis as much as it can, so it's usually more objective (Informant SL).

In this study, informants suggest a critical emphasis on the need for information objectivity in organizational crisis communication. Despite their extensive engagement with social media, they underscore the importance of objective information during crises. This generation exhibits heightened analytical capabilities, emphasizing the necessity of adopting a neutral stance when evaluating organizational issues and crises. Within this framework, informants perceive organizational communication as an information product bound by the ethics of communication, particularly the imperative of information objectivity. The value placed on information objectivity is not unique to the informants but shares common ground with preceding generations. This characteristic reflects a continuity in the expectations for information consumption across generational lines.

Moreover, individuals from Gen Z who have undergone formal education are likely to display increased awareness of potential biases and ethical challenges inherent in information sharing. This heightened awareness aligns with the broader trend of increasing emphasis on media literacy and critical thinking skills in contemporary education, contributing to a more discerning approach to information consumption among educated members of Generation Z. Objectivity is a social reality particularly relevant in the realm of media information (Leonhard et al., 2020). In this context, inaccurate information is identified and labelled as public lies. The current research underscores the significant emphasis placed by Gen Z on the paramount importance of objective information, especially during times of crisis. For them, the information crafted in organizational crisis communication must be distinguished from falsehoods or inaccuracies. Despite acknowledging the dilemmatic nature of this endeavour, informants maintain a steadfast commitment to upholding the values of objectivity in the sphere of organizational crisis communication. This insistence on maintaining accuracy aligns with the broader societal understanding of the role of objectivity in mitigating the potential impact of misinformation.

In the realm of crisis communication, the initial and crucial step for an organization is to disseminate information across its various social networks (Hussin & Rahman, 2023; Witt & Baird, 2018), given that social media stands as a primary information source for the public and the Z generation as well. The diverse array of social media platforms utilized by mostly Gen Z facilitates their ability to scrutinize the organization's stance and commitment during the formulation of crisis information. A notable feature of new media is its capacity to enable two-way communication or dialogue, and the chat platforms within social media provide the Z generation with avenues for engaging in discussions related to organizational crises. This interaction not only expands their perspectives but also contributes to the formation of opinions.

Central to this communication strategy is the significance of objectivity in crisis information. Objective information serves as a vital tool in mitigating uncertainty during crisis communication. According to the informants, they benefit from objective information, allowing them to grasp the broader picture of a crisis and shape their understanding accordingly. This study reaffirms that information inconsistency during a crisis intensifies uncertainty, potentially leading to a fragmented understanding among the Z generation, especially the educated ones. Consequently, the cultivation of objective information becomes pivotal in reducing uncertainty. In the face of ambiguous events or intricate challenges, individuals, including the Z generation, turn to objective facts as a means of gaining clarity and a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted elements at play.

Numerous studies have consistently indicated that the Gen Z cohort exhibits challenges in effectively evaluating the credibility of sources in online media (Waworuntu et al., 2022; Mandagi & Aseng, 2021). This includes difficulties in discerning accurate information, differentiating between news and advertising, and critically assessing the accuracy of information (Djafarova & Fouts, 2022; Nikolić et al., 2022). Additionally, research has revealed a tendency for Generation Z to display "nonepistemic" behaviours when evaluating, selecting, and sharing online information, focusing less on epistemic considerations related to credibility or reliability (Niaz Ahmed, 2019).

However, this current study introduces a hopeful perspective by suggesting that higher education can play a crucial role in cultivating ethical considerations in information consumption. It proposes that individuals from Gen Z who have undergone formal education are likely to exhibit heightened awareness of potential biases and ethical concerns inherent in the information they encounter. This implies that educational experiences may contribute to enhancing the critical thinking skills necessary for discerning the credibility of sources and navigating the complexities of online information. As such, the study underscores the potential positive impact of education in empowering Gen Z to engage with information more ethically and responsibly.

Concise Information in Crisis Communication

Another ethical approach highlighted by informants in crisis communication is concise communication. Concise communication is considered a fundamental principle of ethical crisis communication, emphasizing the efficient and clear delivery of essential information. In crises, organizations are expected to optimize their time to convey messages quickly and clearly so that stakeholders gain knowledge about management policies, such as how to minimize damage, especially to affected communities. Effective crisis communication is timely, consistent, and transparent (Coombs & Holladay, 2010). The informants then characterize openness in two ways: the organization's readiness to involve stakeholders and the adoption of total transparency.

Thus, the informants perceive that social media channels can be effectively utilized without immediately tarnishing the organization's image during organizational crises. Instead, these channels are maximized to provide clear and accurate information in crisis communication. This strategic use of social media aligns with the principles of quick response and consistency, contributing to a more transparent and open communication approach during times of crisis (Kochigina et al., 2021). The following statement from informants emphasized this perspective:

Quick information and clear response, so the public doesn't have to explain and make the crisis worse (Informant JES).

Information that directly addresses the crisis points is eye-catching, and if possible, ear-catching (Informant KY).

Social media serves as not only an effective means of monitoring and actively participating in proactive public discourse but also as a tool for participatory crises or emergency communication (AO & Mak, 2021). The key distinction in crafting messages for social media, as opposed to more traditional communication methods, lies in the rapidity of information delivery and the potential for information errors (Witt & Baird, 2018).

In responding to crises, strategies can be categorized into three main approaches: information instruction, information adjustment, and reputation improvement (Do & Nham, 2021). Instructional information aids stakeholders in dealing with the crisis at a physical level. For instance, declarations about product withdrawals and evacuation signals fall under the category of instructional information. Information adjustment is aimed at helping individuals cope with crises psychologically. Expressions of sympathy, corrective actions, details about crisis events, provision of counselling services, and, to a certain extent, compensation are all examples of information adjustment (Haupt, 2021). These strategies recognize the diverse needs of stakeholders during a crisis and emphasize the importance of tailored communication to address both physical and psychological aspects.

According to the informant's statement, social media organizations should function as channels that adapt and instruct information as a fundamental ethical response during a crisis. This ethical response, classified as a basic ethical obligation, is recommended whenever a crisis impacts victims or those suffering from the crisis in some way. Crisis managers or public relations professionals are advised to prioritize this basic ethical response (Jin et al., 2018). At a minimum or low level of crisis management, essential ethical responses are crucial to safeguard the organization's assets (Austin & Jin, 2017).

The study, based on informant insights, highlights Gen Z who have a background in communication education potentially inherent in mistrust of organizational reporting. However, despite this scepticism, informants hold the belief that in times of crisis, organizations possess comprehensive knowledge and are therefore expected to have good intentions in communicating honestly and openly with the public. During crisis communication, organizations are further expected to convey authenticity, demonstrating the ability to communicate based on facts, thereby earning the trust and belief of stakeholders (Zhang et al., 2021). In this context, Public Relations plays a crucial role in facilitating organizations' open communication to establish trust and credibility (Lovari & Bowen, 2020; Macnamara et al., 2021). The study underscores the importance of ethical and authentic communication strategies, particularly during crises, to foster positive perceptions among Generation Z.

Up-to-Date Information at Every Stage of the Crisis

Lastly, informants emphasized the ethical approach of providing up-to-date information. In the context of a crisis, disseminating the latest information is considered ethical behavior for

organizations to ensure that stakeholders have an accurate and current understanding of the ongoing situation. During a crisis, situations can be highly dynamic, so ensuring that the information conveyed is always up-to-date can help prevent the spread of fake news or disinformation. Additionally, this study reveals that informants perceive crisis information as requiring periodic delivery or updates at each stage of the crisis. Considering the distinct phases of pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis that organizations undergo, crisis information needs to align with the dynamics of each stage.

The obligation falls on the organization to proactively communicate information about crisis resolution, demonstrating a commitment to transparency and allowing the public to comprehensively understand the professionalism and practices employed in crisis management. This underscores the significance of organizations not only delivering accurate information but also tailoring their communication strategies to match the evolving nature of a crisis. It emphasizes the necessity for organizations to convey not only the status of the crisis but also their strategies for mitigation, resolution, and recovery, fostering a more informed and engaged public perception. As stated by two informants below,

A more update on a particular issue (Informant VA).

Acquiring the latest information regarding a crisis (Informant RAK).

In the social relationships of Gen Z, social media serves as a primary information source, although informants recognize that traditional media also held their attention for a period. Gen Z utilizes social networks not only to connect with others but predominantly to strengthen existing real-world connections. Unlike previous generations, the Z generation's interactivity and emotional engagement with information are not always expressed through verbal conversations or comments.

The perspectives of specific individuals within Gen Z concerning the exchange of information among peers on the Internet have been scrutinized. It has been discerned that young individuals from Gen Z possess unique viewpoints, and these viewpoints are dependent on whether they are exposed to impactful external information that induces a re-evaluation of their decisions (Chen & Lin, 2021). A predominant portion of Gen Z individuals prioritizes digital connections over factors such as monetary considerations, musical preferences, or cinematic choices. Consequently, Generation Z accentuates the significance of online interactions in moulding their perceptions and interpersonal connections.

The notion of irresponsible perception encompasses the ascription and dissemination of information, a process intricately linked to the underpinnings of the attribution theory of Situational Communication Crisis Theory (SCCT). Engaging in irresponsible behaviour as a corporation poses the potential risk of harming the company's reputation, analogous to how companies actively pursue favourable media coverage while endeavouring to alleviate unfavourable portrayals (Witt & Baird, 2018). Negative comments on social media, much like unfavourable coverage in traditional media, can harm a company's reputation. Social media serves as a direct channel for corporate reputation, by passing the traditional media gatekeepers.

However, merely utilizing social media to criticize a company's actions doesn't guarantee that other stakeholders will notice, care about the message, or advocate for change that leads to corporate reform. The challenge lies in the potential for paralysis, which introduces a different dynamic by amplifying public visibility in the management of crisis risks. The interconnected nature of perception, attribution, and reputation underscores the intricate dynamics companies face in the modern information landscape.

Gen Z typically serves as organizational stakeholders, and some are influencers within the digital media landscape as well. There is a notable level of criticism directed at Gen Z, particularly because the educational factor should be a key consideration for organizations, especially in critical situations. This generation holds a significant position in social media networks, characterized by high centralization, and exhibits substantial interest in organizational posts, reflecting urgency and legitimacy. Given their influential role, that characteristic of Gen Z has the potential to shape the narrative surrounding organizational crises and impact how both victims and the broader public perceive and understand these crises.

Recognizing the influence and centrality of Gen Z in digital media, organizations have an opportunity to engage with these influencers through various collaborative approaches and direct communication. For instance, organizations can develop shared crisis content or adopt a co-production model of the word network. In this model, influencers are invited to contribute to the generation of messages based on input provided by the organization (Singh et al., 2020). This collaborative and participatory approach not only leverages the influential power of Gen Z but also fosters a sense of shared responsibility in crisis communication, potentially enhancing the authenticity and resonance of the messages conveyed.

Gen Z, being digital natives, assumes a pivotal role as a crucial stakeholder in shaping crisis information on social media, actively participating in the ongoing discourse or 'public talk.' Given their high engagement, they possess the ability to easily disseminate electronic Word of Mouth (e-WoM), significantly impacting the reputation of organizations. The regular updating of information on social media not only facilitates transparency but also contributes to the portrayal of the organization as actively managing and resolving crises. Just like Gen Z in Indonesia, who are self-motivated digital users, actively seeking online information on topics of their interest (Hinduan et al., 2020).

The presence of updated information on social media serves as a visual representation of organizational transparency in crisis management. Transparent communication is vital in providing Gen Z with seamless access to accurate information. This accessibility plays a crucial role in counteracting disinformation and rumours that may otherwise proliferate during times of crisis. By fostering an environment of openness and clarity, organizations can enhance their credibility and build trust with Gen Z, reinforcing the importance of authentic and transparent crisis communication.

CONCLUSION

Gen Z with a specific educational background emerges as a significant stakeholder in terms of the dynamics of organizational communication in the digital world. Contrary to a short-term and transactional approach, the relationship between an organization and Gen Z is envisioned as a long-term commitment. Leveraging the digital networks inherent to Gen Z, organizations

are encouraged to implement strategies that cultivate enduring relationships and foster loyalty. This approach not only facilitates ongoing engagement with Gen Z but also acknowledges the interconnected nature of their extensive digital networks, emphasizing the need for strategic communication to manage information effectively.

The substantial connectivity within the expansive Gen Z network signifies a heightened intensity in the exchange of information, experiences, and collaborative efforts among its members, particularly concerning an organization's conduct. In this context, the inclination of Gen Z to align with the prevailing opinions of their peers underscores the strategic importance for organizations to adeptly manage information and communication on social media platforms. Strategic communication is crucial to navigate and influence the narrative within Gen Z's digital landscape, ensuring that the organization's message aligns with the prevalent sentiments and opinions circulating within this influential demographic.

Crisis communication management presents organizations with an opportunity to establish mutual value with Gen Z, especially well-educated ones. The distinct and realistic characteristics of Gen Z scholars in consuming information, imply in the formulation of crisis information by public relations as a communication manager. PR not only formulates information and announcements to the affected public but adjusts long-term public communication styles, such as Gen Z. This strategic approach not only has the potential to maintain relationships and engagement with this kind of Gen Z but also serves as a means to foster understanding, appreciation, and reference learning on the part of them regarding how reputation is managed during crises. The ethical behavior exhibited by organizations during a crisis can serve as a valuable lesson for scholars of Generation Z, offering an opportunity for discussion and dialogue on social media. This interaction provides organizations with a chance to capture the rationality and critical-ethical attitudes of these scholars of Gen Z, who represent the future public of the organization.

A constraint of this study is the restricted number of participants, confined to the university level only. Its small sample size from a highly specific population makes it inappropriate to generalize that all Gen Z members will respond similarly. Therefore, validation and expansion of these findings are necessary. Future research should include a larger and more diverse sample. Additionally, subsequent studies could consider variables such as cultural background and varying digital experiences to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how Gen Z responds to crisis communication.

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