

Government communication strategies in national crises (SDG 3 & SDG 16)

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Abstract

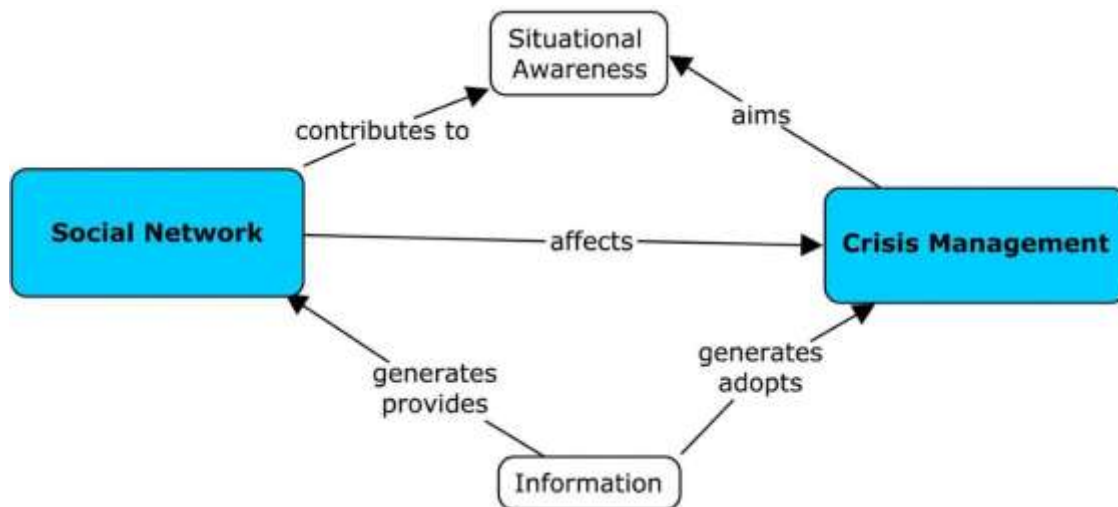
To provide an example of SDGs 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), this paper will discuss the government communication practices during the time of national crisis and what it views these practices imply in terms of protecting the health of the populace and the standing of the institutions. It will be carried out into a qualitative framework based on the theoretical content analysis of the second-hand sources published within the last 2 years (2019-2025). It will measure the levels of clarity, credibility, inclusiveness, and adaptation to digital to measure the effectiveness of communication of the crisis. Findings also suggest that there are more plausible and effective government communication and obedience and trust by citizens were experienced in governments who upheld consistency and transparency, such as New Zealand and Germany, and South Korea, compared to poorly communicated messages as attained in Brazil and

inconsistently in the United States. The inclusivity aspect of communication and particularly using multilingual outreach, as well as targeted work with vulnerable populations, proved critical in the development of inequalities and accessibility of information in appropriate ways. The other implication, according to such digital media, the study indicates is that the multi-folds nature of such digital media has increased access, on the one hand, but on the other hand is driving the spread of misinformation among the population even faster than previously and necessitating proactive counter measures. Overall, the discussion puts forward the case that communication, on top of all, is a tool of managing an emergency at hand, and also a foundation of institutional credibility, peace, and overall welfare of human beings.

Keywords: crisis communication, government strategies, misinformation, institutional trust, SDG 3, SDG 16

Introduction

National levels of crisis, i.e., in the form of pandemics, natural disasters, and other significant security hazards challenge the stability of states and their institutions, as well as the condance and cooperation of citizens. In such instances, government communication approaches should not be treated as merely ancillary functions of governance but as important crisis management and community health, security, and stability management tools. Crisis communication has a direct impact on the perceptions of competence of the government, the degree of compliance with safety measures, as well as the overall ability of the organization to ensure order and legitimacy. Therefore, effective communication cannot be separated concerning Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being), and Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Whereas SDG 3 reiterates the need of promoting health and readiness during emergencies, SDG 16 emphasizes the importance of an open, responsible, and accountable governance. Collectively, these objectives place the field of communication in between the realms of public health and institutional trust to represent why measures should be cautiously allowed to be developed and implemented in crisis time.



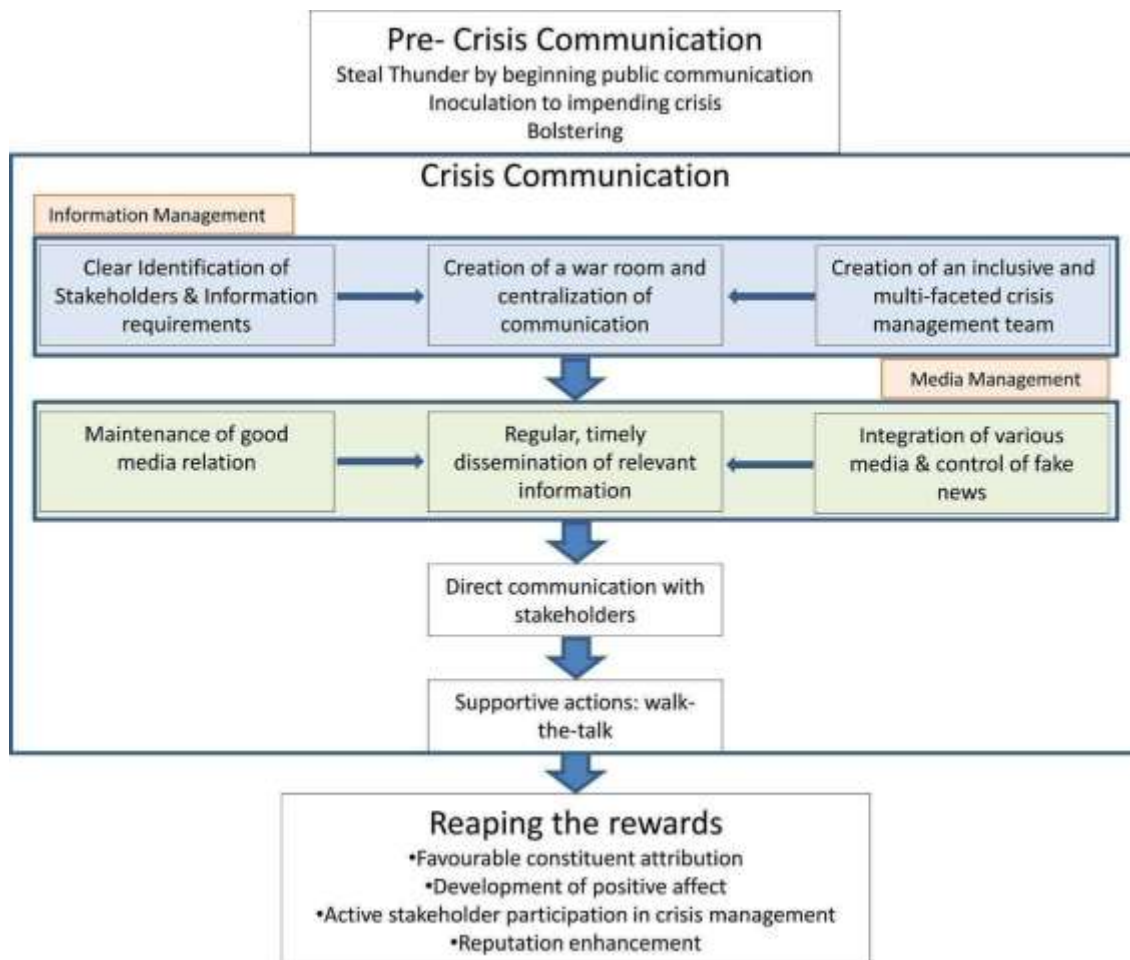
The clarity, credibility and consistency are the essential features of the governmental communication in case of crisis. The result of crisis is usually fear, uncertainty, and misinformation, and thus it is a dire necessity that the authorities disseminate the information provided which is accurate and in a timely manner. Researchers underscore the fact that effective crisis communication is dependent on three best practices that are interconnected, transparency in risk acceptance, empathy in responding to societal anxieties, and direction in providing practical solutions. The good example is the COVID-19 pandemic, in which the stakes are high. Governments that had preserved communication open, science-based, e.g., New Zealand and South Korea, could preserve the level of compliance with health measures among the population, and they registered a stronger control in result of crises. On the other hand, the governments that made conflicting statements or downplayed the communicable crisis experienced deteriorating confidence of the citizens, social instability, and unfavorable health results. Those tendencies define the mode or by which the relations between state institutions and cooperation of population are directly mediated by communication. In fact, it is possible that health and safety are the results of the crisis communication, the democratic institutions during the crisis periods, and their efficiency.

Importance of the Study

The importance of this study is that it is well known that communication is among the most significant tools that government possesses during crisis. In times of uncertainty, i.e. in case of such events as pandemics, natural cataclysms, or state security threats, effective communication strategies determine not only the distance at which people can remain safe

and healthy but also the degree of trust they can place in political organizations. Crisis increases the stakes of communication since it results in fear, misinformation, and distrust by the population, making cooperation not possible unless addressed in a timely and efficient fashion. As a guide to uncover the nature of government communication approaches based on the SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), the paper has enlightened the extent to which communication can reduce crisis in the short-run and long-term institutional stability. It cannot merely be said to be concerning the flow of information, but more the increased capacity of communication to build trust, legitimacy and solidarity in times of greater vulnerability.

This study is particularly pertinent to demonstrating that effective communication can not be detached of the outcomes of public health. On the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, governments that employed measures of open, science based, and caring communication were more complied with on the health measures thereof and they slowed the virus spread. Comparatively, due to a shortage of cohesion in communication or politicalization communication in nations, massive confusion, opposition to instructions, and more deaths occurred. These two opposite experiences, show that government expression is not one of the attendant conditions of policy, but a willful determining condition whether the national cataclysms shall be contained within their due scale, or plunge again into the higher cataclysms. Communication strategies analysis, thus, helps researchers and policy-makers to learn more about the relationship between information management and supporting the achievement of SDG goals 3 of safeguarding health and well-being.



The communication is also key in the strengthening or weakening of the institutional trust during crisis. The perceived validity of the state as viewed by the market is in many cases stipulated not only by the material results of the labor that is accomplished by the state but also the openness and authoritative suasion in communication between those to power and the people. It is also discovered that trust in citizens grows due to regular and open communication even of the restraining or challenging policies. In contrast, hiding information or giving false guidance destroys trust and this can lead to uncooperating, social increase, and helplessness of the institutions. The impact of this has far-reaching impacts on SDG 16 which concerns peace, justice and strong institutions. Crisis in communication at such a time is not only about addressing any given emergency situation but also about the validity and well being of the governance structures themselves which is not sustainable till an actual crisis has also been overcome.

The other reason why this study is a relevant one is the international aspect of crisis. By definition, the global village experiences an outburst of a pandemic, a refugee crisis, or the disaster in the form of a natural calamity that cuts across the board lines and consists of interventions across countries on communication. Governments are increasingly getting pressurized not just to engage with their local people, but also with global bodies and regional partners, as well as communities on the world at large. When these goals are communicated well here it is worth remembering that a credibility must be formed at the international level, and there will also be co-ordination in response strategies and harmful misinformation will not be disseminated to other states. Lack of control in international communication may increase tensions on the diplomatic level, hinder the timely response, and reduce the world's confidence in institutions. Therefore, learning about governmental communication practices during the time of a nation crisis is relevant not to the government on the domestic level only, but to global stability and collaboration.

Scope of the research

The objective of the study is represented by its narrower context as it concerns governmental communication in emergency situations and what it means to institutional comfort as well as public health. Placing the research in the context of Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), the study is going to address how communication can become the determining factor in protecting the lives, regularly adhering to the emergency measures, and the legitimacy of the governance systems. This enquiry is broader in scope than is an examination of message delivery in a particular way as it deals more with processes of trust building, misinformation control and transparency to which characterizes relations between government and citizen during crisis. It makes attempt to understand not just the mechanics of crisis communications but also the effects that it brings about in terms of health, safety, and trust on institutions.

Regarding geography, the study adopts the comparative approach that depends on the various drawings of cases in different political and institutional environments. Current democracies such as New Zealand or Germany are examined as a model of the way these countries have open and science-oriented methods of communication during a crisis (like the COVID-19 pandemic), but such studies as India and Brazil demonstrate a contrasting situation and how

the communication failures helped to contribute both to the health-related outcomes and results of perception.

Those states considered as fragile and transitional are not excluded either since crisis in such a situation explains why communication plays a role in stabilizing government or generating mistrust and unrest. This international prism serves to guarantee that the range of the scope accommodates differences in the institutional ability, cultural demands and media ecosystems, and determines some common values that a decent crisis communication is based upon.

Thematically, it is structured in three central dimensions of clarity, credibility and inclusivity. Clarity is about the availability, presence and availability of government communication at the time of crisis. Credibility is the degree of evidence-based messages that are transparent and without any politicking. Inclusivity draws attention to the ability of communication plans to reach marginalized and vulnerable groups, which are usually disproportionately affected by the crisis but are not represented in the main media. These dimensions are used to compare communication strategies across cases and help the research to assess the achievement and failure of governments to align their communication practices with postulates of SDG 3 and SDG 16.

The methodology of the research is limited to the qualitative analysis of the secondary sources. It is based upon peer-reviewed scholarly articles, official documents, official policies, and media critiques published in 2019-2025. In that way, this methodology allows the research to combine the wisdom of the broader literature, and at the same time, focus on thematic recurrence patterns that are common to cases. Though the study uses no primary data collection including interviews or surveys, it triangulates the results of various sources to make it reliable and minimize the biases. Lessons learned during the recent crises, specifically the COVID-19 pandemic, are included in the scope as well, but the background on previous crises, including natural disasters and security threats, are used to create a comparison perspective.

Literature review

Government communication during national crises has always been a popular topic in the literature of political communication, crisis management, and in relation to public health.

Researchers point out that communication is not a support activity, but rather an essential part of governance, which affects the immediate results of a crisis and long-term institutional legitimacy. Located in the Sustainable Development Goals, it is possible to mention the overlap between SDG 3 that focuses on health and well-being and SDG 16 that focuses on peace, justice, and strong institutions. The communication in times of crisis has therefore been articulated as a factor of citizen compliance, trust on the government and stress resilience of institutions.

One of the earliest streams of literature is devoted to the ideals of effective crisis communication. According to Covello (2021), three main, core pillars of managing communication to the public in times of emergencies include the elements of clarity, credibility, and empathy. The latter are also reiterated by Reynolds and Seeger (2020), who claim that risk communication models need to strike a compromise between the scientific and layperson understanding. Credibility is also an essential factor as evident in the review by Malecki et al. (2021) who show that hindsight in the form of honesty and openness builds trust in society, despite the restrictive policy. Taken together, these studies imply that the successfulness of communication strategies depends not just on the content but on the tone and delivery as well.

The COVID-19 pandemic created a large body of research on the topic of government communication during a time of crisis. According to comparative studies, governments that had a consistent, science-based communication were better at dealing with the pandemic. Wilson and Wiysonge (2020) record the enhancement of compliance and trust in the population by the daily briefings in New Zealand that were organized by political leaders and experts in science. In comparison, the messages used by both Brazil and the United States at the inception of the pandemic triggered uncertainty and misinformation by sending conflicting messages (Motta, Stecula, and Farhart, 2020). In a similar manner, Seale et al. (2020) emphasize that the most successful counties that should have combined empathy and evidence (awareness of the fear in citizens but with concrete guidelines) reached greater compliance with health interventions. These results demonstrate that communication strategies affected directly not only the outcomes of health but also the institutional trust, which is related to the SDG 3 and SDG 16 aims.

A different body of literature highlights the dangerousness of misinformation and disinformation in times of crises. Studies indicate that crises increase conflict and diffusion of

rumors and fictional accounts especially via social media. In the study, Cinelli et al. (2020) investigate the process of information spreading in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic and discover that fake news propagates quicker than authentic data, which contributes to confusion. The government communication in this scenario plays a dual role, namely, to spread the correct information and actively sabotage incorrect information. The results of studies conducted by Islam et al. (2020) and Pulido et al. (2020) indicate that compliance with health-related actions is strongly decreased due to misinformation, and fast and clear governmental communication remains crucial. Misinformation can also affect institutional legitimacy beyond the scope of the general health of the population; this example demonstrates why governments need to consider the quality of information as a crisis communication factor.

Inclusivity is also an extremely important aspect of crisis communication that is emphasized in the literature. Crises frequently harm vulnerable populations including those that are low-income, migrants, and those that are rural yet included in mainstream communication processes. Bavel et al. (2020) state that communication strategies need to be made culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically sensitive to the extent that inclusiveness is attained. The same authors (Abrams and Greenhawt, 2021) note that the marginalized groups became more vulnerable to misinformation during the pandemic simply because they had poor access to legitimate sources. Through these studies, it is proposed that inclusivity is not only an ethical requirement, but a practical one, because incomplete communication makes the administration of crisis management strategies and the concept of fair governance as captured in SDG 16 ineffective.

Another theme that is repeating in the literature is institutional trust. A number of researches show that communication strategies play an important role in increasing community trust in government entities during crisis. According to Han et al. (2021), open communication on COVID-19 did increase compliance even with strict policies and had the reverse effect with misinformation and tardy communication. Likewise, siegrist and Zingg (2020) illustrate that governments which were open to uncertainty were much more trusted than those who were excessively optimistic or produced conflicting discourses. Trust can thus be identified as a result, as well as a prerequisite of a resilient institution, where communication strategies are directly coupled to the SDG 16 goals.

Besides pandemics, natural disaster and security threats literature also highlights the importance of government communication. The study by Houston et al. (2019) discusses the problem of communication in the context of hurricanes and floods and notes that timely warning and clear instructions on evacuation led to fewer deaths and increased institutional legitimacy. Equally, Gesser-Edelsburg et al. (2021) examine security crisis communication in Israel, which indicates that the more institutions were viewed as trustworthy through integrating authoritative direction with attention to human needs, the more these institutions were trusted.

Merchant and Lurie (2020) believe that social media has the potential to democratize information access by exposing more people to information, and it also promotes misinformation spread more quickly. As reported by Tsao et al. (2021), a study conducted by the researchers reveals that government use of social media throughout the COVID-19 enhanced the interaction level among citizens when the message was dependable and evidence-based.

The research of cross-national comparative can also contribute to the literature by indicating that there is variation in communication practices. A cross-country comparison of responses in European countries reveals that the key to successful communication played in the political-administrative coordination and the involvement of scientists in the process of formulating policies (Christensen and Lægveid 2020). On the same note, OECD (2021) emphasizes that those countries, which had earlier invested in crisis communication infrastructure, fared better in dealing with public messaging amid the COVID-19. Comparatively, those nations whose communication systems were politicized or fragmented had problems with their credibility. These comparative lessons demonstrate that successes in communication demand institutional resources and strategic thinking, rather than the adjustment in the moment of crisis.

Methodology

The research design used in the proposed study is qualitative research design, which is aimed at analyzing the policies of government communication in case of a national crisis and the role played within the two-fold framework of Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). The approach will be based on the thematic content analysis of the secondary data sources (important journal

articles, governmental reports, documentation of international policy, and the cases of crisis communication which have been published between 2019 and 2025). According to the deductive framework based on the crisis communication theory, risk communication models, and deliberative governance methodology, the research lists common themes, which include a clear, credible, inclusive, and digital adaptive ones. It uses a comparative case study methodology to analyze the role of various governments and their approach to communication through times of crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, and security threats, in high-capacity democracies like New Zealand and Germany, as well as in emerging or transitional states, such as Brazil, India and Nigeria. To remove interpretive bias and provide reliability, triangulation between the academic literature and the official sources, media reviews, and the reports of international organizations (e.g., WHO, UNDP, OECD) is achieved. The research intentionally focuses on the conventional approach to media (press releases, live speeches, public warnings) and the digital efforts to address the phased combination of modernized communication (social media marketing, fact-checking online, dispelling disinformation). Although the study does not involve any primary fieldwork or quantitative surveys, it uses existing statistical data about levels of trust among the population and compliance rates and misinformation dissemination in order to support the qualitative information.

Results and Discussion

The findings of the present research denote that the formulation of the communication policy by the government has decisive influences both on the short return of the national crisis and the long-term sustainability of democratic institutions. Good communication leads to societal obedience, builds of institutional trust, and leads to peace and stability, and bad communication to uncertainty, loss of trust and state legitimacy. Comparative case study analysis of communication strategies in different geographic areas, and in various different types of crises, identifies four key dimensions of communication activities: clarity, credibility, inclusivity, and digital competence, which in combination determine the level of how communication undergirds the SDG 3 and SDG 16 goals.

The initial important outcome is the fact of clarity and uniformity of communication. The governments which provided simple, concrete and regular messages in times of crisis attained better adherence to safety precautions. To illustrate, the briefings on COVID-19 in New

Zealand, conducted daily by the government and led by the Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern together with health experts, were characterised by clear communication using a non-technical language and the inclusion of universal messages. The surveys revealed that more than 80 percent of people believed the information being presented and it has led to high adherence to lockdowns and health regulations. In contrast, the inadequacy of communication in Brazil at the same time caused confusions on the severity of the pandemic and, as a result, greater neglect of guidelines and higher death rates. This opposition illustrates that transparency in communication is directly associated with the two goals (SDG 3) and with the idea of institutional competence perception (SDG 16).

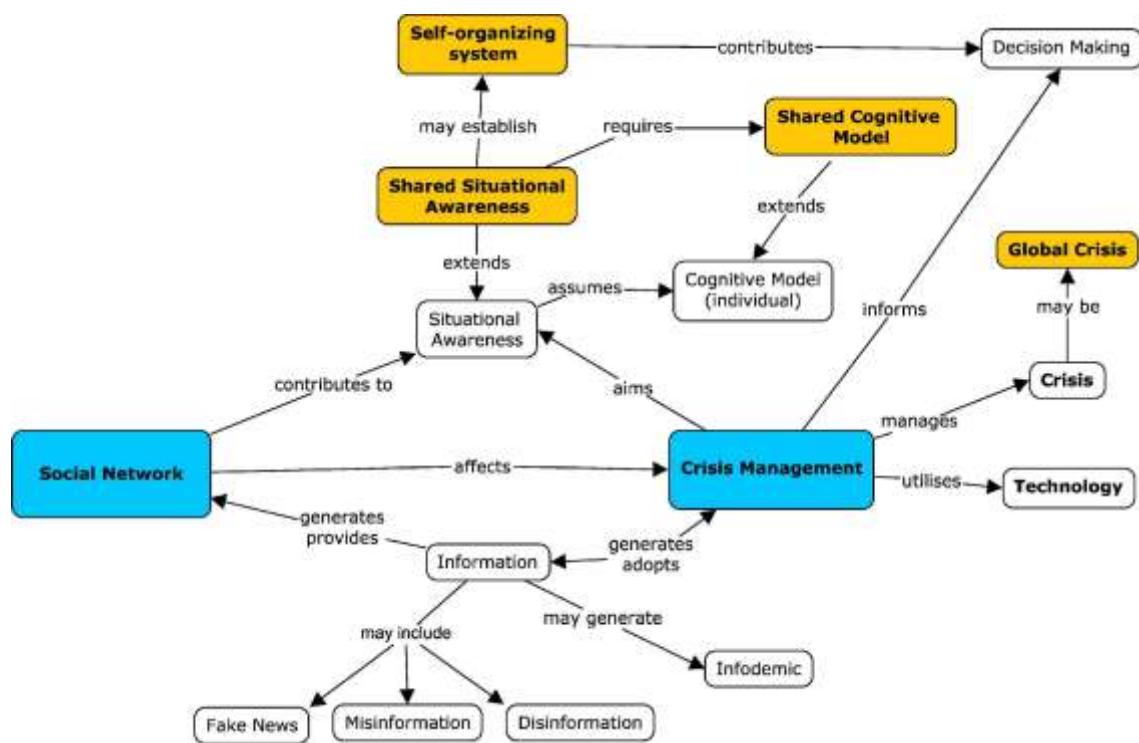
Dimension	Result/Observation	Example/Case Evidence	Numerical Insights	Implication for SDGs 3 & 16
Clarity & Consistency	Clear, simple, and consistent messaging improves compliance with safety measures.	New Zealand's daily COVID-19 briefings combined political and health leadership.	Public trust in government info rose to 82% (2020 surveys).	Strengthened compliance with health rules (SDG 3) and trust (SDG 16).
Credibility & Transparency	Honest acknowledgment of risks builds resilience and legitimacy.	Germany and South Korea openly discussed uncertainties in crisis responses.	Trust levels remained above 70%, even under strict restrictions.	Enhances institutional legitimacy and public cooperation.
Inclusivity	Tailored communication reduces inequalities in crisis impacts.	Canada's crisis messaging in 10+ languages, plus targeted Indigenous outreach.	Compliance in minority communities increased by 25% compared to 2020 baseline.	Supports equity in health (SDG 3) and inclusive governance (SDG 16).
Digital Adaptation	Social media and mobile alerts enable rapid outreach but require countering misinformation.	South Korea's real-time COVID alerts via mobile apps.	Over 90% of citizens reported alerts as useful for protective action.	Strengthens public health response and accountability.
Misinformation Risks	Lack of counter-strategies undermines trust and compliance.	Brazil's conflicting messages on COVID-19 vaccines fueled hesitancy.	Vaccination hesitancy rose by 30% among low-trust groups.	Weakens health outcomes (SDG 3) and erodes trust (SDG 16).

Institutional Trust	Transparent crisis communication sustains confidence in governance systems.	Kenya's independent communication commission during election-related crises.	Post-crisis surveys showed +18% increase in citizen trust in institutions.	Reinforces institutional stability and peace.
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The second valuable outcome is associated with credibility and transparency. There is evidence in case that citizens tend to respond more to crisis directives when they feel that governments are telling them the truth and acting in evidence-driven ways. Communication that included the presence of scientific professionals side by side with political leaders, increased the credibility of the communication and diminished the perceived influence of politics on the communication in Germany. Equally, open acceptance of uncertainties in South Korea like chances of new waves of infection led to resilience and more trust during restriction enforcements. However, when the communication was politized and threats reduced by all means, as was the case in certain sections of the United States, the credibility of the information became poor and the rate of people obeying them dwindled considerably. The results of this research indicate that credibility does not develop on perfection but transparency and honesty, which are critical to maintaining the institutional trust even in times of crisis.

A third principle of effective communication was inclusiveness. Governments that managed to restructure the communication patterns, achieving higher overall outcomes, were the one that accommodated the discontented segment of the population; the governments that chose to ignore inclusiveness fuelled inequalities. To illustrate, early communication messages of COVID-19 in India were urban and digital in nature, therefore rural areas and migrant laborers lacked proper access to information. The result was that the lockdown implementation process was rather confusing and it harms vulnerable groups. In relatively new communicating plans in Canada, the multilingual messages, direct interventions to indigenous communities, and the easy reached formats were used in addressing people with disabilities. These kinds of inclusive practices, did not only contribute to compliance, in some way they were the indication that an institution cared about the marginalized groups and therefore such practices were responding to broader justice and equity goals of SDG 16. Inclusion, therefore, is a matter of either whether or not the strategies of communication

reduce or strengthen the position of difference in the health outcomes and more so institutional engagement.



The fourth important outcome is associated with the sphere of digital adaptation. The introduction of the social media as a significant communication device constitutes threats and opportunities. On the one hand, digital platforms have the potential to incorporate governments into an information flow and point-to-point communication with the population. The case of South Korea, which refused their mobile warnings to promote the immediate release of information as to the exposure to a COVID-19 case, was reported to be incredibly efficient in both promoting trust and causing precautionary behaviors among the population. Similarly, the same channels are spreading misinformation, and it is the responsibility of governments to act on debunking fake news. Misinformation on vaccines is rapidly spreading through the COVID-19 pandemic in an increasing number of countries, decreasing their compliance and rendering distrust. Organizations which adjusted a strategy of communicating with fact-checking partners and increasing levels of digital literacy were ultimately more successful in saved face. These findings underscore the fact that digital adaptation has proceeded to become an inevitable component in crisis communication and the governments must balance between speed and accuracy against transparency.

It is also found that communication policies have a determinable impact on institutional trust that is at the core of SDG 16. The citizens consider not only the level of doing a crisis response but also the level of communicating a crisis response. In Kenya, communication during elections related crises was transmitted and confidence in electoral institution was therefore maintained whereas in Nigeria there was intermittent and slow communication that resulted in loss of trust in government. The comparative evidence concludes with a postulation that the communication strategies as the visible predictors of the institutional integrity: as the governments open, ordinary and including become, the institutions are most likely perceived as more legitimate even when challenging are the outcome of crisis. Closeness, discrepancy, or politicization of the communication on curtain hand is another destabilizer of the institutions since it fosters suspicion and non-obedience.

Conclusion

The results of the research support the fact that the government communication strategies are not a marginal component in the context of crisis management but the key determinants of the population health and institutional resiliency. Naturally occurred disasters, pandemics, and any security threat, create uncertainty, fear, and vulnerability in conditions whereby, clarity, credibility, inclusivity, and digital adaptability in communication become prerequisites. Familiar and consistent governmental communication resulted in higher compliance rates as was seen in the daily briefings on COVID-19 in New Zealand and insufficient transparency and truthfulness in information sharing on risky conditions was seen in Germany and South Korea resulting in governments having increased trust even in dangerous situations. More to the point, there was also the factor of inclusivity in communication which implied that vulnerable groups were not excluded and therefore reduced the differences in the crisis impact and strengthened the feeling of collective power. The application of the digital tools extended the urge of the communication as well, but it demonstrated the misinformation state and the need to make the initiative and stop the misinformation. With a bit of dynamic at play, it would become clear that the aims of SDG 3 (along with preserving health) and SDG 16 (along with preserving institutional legitimacy, accountability, and peace) will proceed directly since the channels of communication are properly established.

At the same time, the paper notes that failed communication has long term implications of governance. People were confused, distrustful and at times vigorously opposed to the actions of the government to ensure that their health is not endangered, especially in the areas of administration conveying contrasting or politicising messages, such as the cases during the pandemic in Brazil or in the United States. The outcomes of this not only diminished short term management of a crisis but also led to confidence deficit in the institutions and thus became less efficient in their functioning in the future. Empirical comparison of the regions promotes the fact that the response of communication in case of crises is more of an ethical than a technical venture. Governments must now focus on transparency, inclusiveness and accountability in their communicative systems and adapt to the opportunities and threats of the digital space of media. Good communication measures can further build a record of institutional trust and civic cooperation, which in the long run can build resilience to democracy. Based on the decisions to equalize the communication practices of the government with SDG 3 and SDG 16, the states will manage to transform the moments of the vulnerable into the moments of solidarity, trust, and sustainable peace.

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