

CONTINGENCY THEORY AND PUBLIC EMOTIONS IN CRISIS COMMUNICATION – A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

RAINY ROSE

School of Communications, XIM University
Plot no: 12(A), 3rd Floor, XIM University
Bhubaneswar, New Campus, Nijigada Kurki, Harirajpur- 752050, Odisha
E-mail address: rainy@stu.xub.edu.in
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4117-1127>

V. VIJAY KUMAR

School of Communications, XIM University
Plot no: 12(A), 3rd Floor, XIM University
Bhubaneswar, New Campus, Nijigada Kurki, Harirajpur- 752050, Odisha
E-mail address: vijaykumarvijayan@gmail.com
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2137-0102>

LALATENDU KESARI JENA

School of Human Resource Management, XIM University
Plot no: 12(A), XIM University
Bhubaneswar, New Campus, Nijigada Kurki, Harirajpur- 752050, Odisha
E-mail address: lkjena@xim.edu.in
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8610-3865>

ABSTRACT

Aim. Problems are inevitable in the subtleties of organizational communication, but it does not mean confronting them is uncontrollable. This paper aims to offer a conceptual structure for investigating contingency theory in Public Relations (PR) during an organizational crisis. The research investigates PR practitioners' use of advocacy and accommodation in contingency theory to intervene in crisis communication. It also offers insights into the public's emotional response and coping mechanisms during a crisis, as well as how understanding these emotions (such as anger, anxiety, fear, and grief, among others) could aid PR professionals in developing more effective crisis communication methods.

Method. Empirical research was conducted on the basis of literature reviews by observing and analyzing the existing literature on contingency theory, crisis communication in organizations, and public emotions.



Results. This conceptual paper proposes and empirically tests a few propositions. The implications for future studies are included in the paper. Findings promote the adopting a dual-continuum strategy that might assist public relations professionals in preferring superior crisis management strategies for obtaining desired organizational outcomes.

Conclusion. The authors assert that PR professionals must move from embracing Grunig's four models of excellence to contingency theory for communicating strategically with the public. The authors propose to adopt a dual-continuum approach that varies from advocacy to accommodation and might provide practical guidance to choose a better stance adopted by the organization towards the public during a crisis. The negative emotions of the public influenced by a crisis along with their emotional coping approaches are also discussed.

Keywords: contingency theory, crisis communication, conflict management, emotions, cognitive appraisal, coping.

INTRODUCTION

Every organization nowadays is aware that crises are unavoidable. Organizations (such as government, corporate, non-profit organizations, and NGOs) practitioners are expected to develop effective communication strategies in response to crisis and conflict to actively uphold their reputation. Organizational crises have an impact on management, staff, stakeholders, the general public, and the community where the organization functions. Crises are characterized as unforeseen but anticipated affairs having concrete or possible repercussions for the benefit of stakeholders along with the reputation of an organization and can take place in various businesses, social contexts, as well as organizational frameworks (Millar & Heath, 2004). Organizations and PR specialists strive to create the most effective communication strategy to communicate with their audience and stakeholders during a crisis.

In PR, developing a theory might be difficult; according to Glen M. Broom (2006), it should be derived from practice and regarded by practitioners as a fundamental element of the field. A theory rooted in the practitioner's world adds valuable context to understanding the integration of theory and practice (Pang et al., 2006). The creation of theories as well as models that reflect variance deep-rooted during a conflict has been the focus of recent studies in public relations as well as conflict management. One of these theories that is particularly well-known is the contingency theory of strategic conflict management (Cameron et al., 2001; Christen & Lovaas, 2022; Jin et al., 2006; Pang et al., 2010a, 2020; Reber & Cameron, 2003; Shin et al., 2006; Yarbrough et al., 1998). Over the years, Contingency Theory (CT) has been regarded as a significant focal point in handling PR crises and conflict. This theory aids in comprehending how contingent factors such as technology, culture, and environment influence an organization's operation. Contingency theory is an alternative idea in PR that has advanced to a feasible theoretical framework that scrutinizes

conflict management that successively apprises communication during a crisis time (Cameron et al., 2008).

Communication is strategically vital when a crisis takes place. Investigation in crisis communication gauges emotional responses among both practitioners as well as the public. Jin (2009) emphasizes that for effective crisis communication, it is pertinent for organizations to recognize the public's emotional needs and as well as coping strategy preferences so that ideal responses can be selected strategically (Jin et al., 2007) and establish a notional structure in implementing the cognitive appraisal view in crisis communication, to recognize crisis responses of the primary public, as indicated by prevailing emotion induced by various kinds of crises (Jin et al., 2010). The main idea of cognitive appraisal theory has been how people deal with stressful circumstances in crisis differently and have different emotional manifestations in various situations. Therefore, coping is correlated with cognition, attitude, and behavior. The public has its own emotions as well as rational strategies for coping with negative emotions during a crisis. It is pertinent for PR practitioners to comprehend both strategies and adapt them to communicate organizational messages to the public crisis coping. The predominant emotions that the general public is likely to experience during times of crisis are negative ones notably anger, fright, anxiety as well as sadness (Jin et al., 2010). Therefore, PR practitioners must take into account these emotions of the public before developing a crisis communication strategy that would help the organization to overcome them.

According to Kathleen Fearn-Banks (2002), the goal of crisis communication is to maintain a continuous dialog between the organization and its audience before, throughout, and after the crisis. Restoring organizational sanity, moulding public opinion, and recovering and restoring reputation are the goals. To achieve this, essential measures must be taken to limit the damage while maintaining the organization's reputation (Pang et al., 2010b). In an organization, crises can happen at any time and are highly unpredictable. The entire humanity has faced the pandemic situation of COVID-19; no organization was left untouched by this pandemic; all industries, including tourism, hotels, aviation, and the food supply chain, endured a lot. The PR expert's exertion was subsequently intense in upholding the status of the organization. A recent example is Amazon, the most popular e-commerce shopping website. This website faced trouble in transactions due to delays in the supply chain, which had a bad impact on its services. It was difficult for Amazon's public relations team to grasp the situation. The tough part for organizations during the conflict is sustaining their reputation. The work of professional PR is sturdy since it goes through lots of opinions while simultaneously achieving the goal of the organization.

Other than Amazon, there are other examples in the past five years that have had foremost communication crises. In 2015, the Nestle-Maggi case

was a major conflict. According to the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the existence of Monosodium glutamate and lead in extreme quantities in Nestlé's Maggi brand after this, social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, Quora, etc.) was flooded with the hashtag #Maggi-Ban. This brand received a lot of unfavorable comments and backlash. As a result, the brand's image was ruined. The PR team's denial and prolonged lack of communication with its audience after the news broke was the major problem (Sarwatay & Paul, 2018). Another case in the year 2019 was the Boeing 737 MAX aircraft crash. It was the globally leading manufacturing firm that had gone through a vital crisis. The company decided to look for authoritative power to continue flying their planes. It was the result of two lethal collisions in a span of five months. The company refused any safety considerations in every response communication as well as in media interviews and continued its business as usual; that did not favour them. The company had to go through a lot of backlash, and the stock took an instant plunge, pricing the company's value at over USD 22 billion, along with a severe attack from the media (Chen, 2020).

As the cases discussed above are the cornerstone for learning PR, for the reputation of the organization, the PR professionals must converse with the external environment (media, public, etc.) instantly with the appropriate strategy and recognize the catastrophe as early as possible. The image of the company is at stake in such positions; therefore, the PR team must be trained in such a manner to handle the inevitable condition. Such a state of affairs must be treated as a prospect by discovering the most excellent approach and upholding the icon of the organization in front of the public while simultaneously dealing with the internal people too. Apart from having roles in marketing communication, media relations, advertising, strategy, research, development, planning, and campaigns, PR also has a pertinent role in crisis management has an operative role in the crisis and mainly results in unrequited crises predetermined on people publicly despite the crisis type (Alzahrani, 2016). Magda Pieczka and Jacquie L'Etang (2006) asserted that PR is a management domain and applied science in the communication backdrop. Most of the learning in crisis communication has been adopted from PR practice. According to Arim Ginsberg and N. Venkatraman (1985), there is no common group of strategic possibilities that are considered most favourable for every organization and situation as the finest strategy deals with a particular group of constraints - contingencies - such as environment, technology, cognition, civilization, structure, as well as the scope of an organization (Donaldson, 2001; Morton & Hu, 2008; Woodward, 1965).

It is pertinent for PR specialists to comprehend strategies and utilize them to communicate an organizational point of view on public crisis coping. According to Jin et al. (2010), negative emotions are probably encountered by the public in times of crisis. Such public emotions must be notified by the PR experts throughout the entire crisis and strategies developed accordin-

gly, which will be beneficial for the organization as well as the public. Thus, this research aims to overview contingency theory in crisis communication and discover how this theory is incorporated into an organization during a crisis. The researchers intend to study a dual-continuum approach in advocacy and accommodation to take a stance during an organizational conflict. The objective also is to study and understand the emotional response of the public, along with their coping strategies during a crisis, and how studying those emotions would help PR practitioners come up with better strategies to communicate during a crisis.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Crisis in an Organization

According to W. Timothy Coombs (2007), the crisis is the awareness of impulsive happenings that intimidate the vital anticipations of stakeholders resulting in directly affecting outcome of the organisation in an adverse way. No organization is crisis-proof; therefore, it is pertinent to prepare backup plans to deal with them. Fearn-Banks (2007) argues that crises in an organization cause a negative influence on the organization, which affects the public, products, services, and even the goodwill of the company. As a result, the smooth running of the business is affected. According to Dervina Sarwatay and Nupur Paul (2018), it is necessary to plan for crises; otherwise, it can damage the goodwill of the company. The types of crises that can dim the image of organizations can be strikes in the organization, economizing, claims of criminal behavior or law-breaking, product recalls, hazards of labour, equipment outbreaks, or government policies. According to S. Sullivan (2003), there exist five varieties of crises in management. A crisis related to finance is directly connected to the economic prominence of a firm and mostly involves temporary liquidity or cash flow issues. The second is a PR crisis that is engaged with pessimistic exposure about product attributes, management obligation toward employees' well-being, as well as government approvals. The third is a *strategic* crisis that modifies the feasibility of the firm due to a change in the environment. Fourth is the natural or sudden crisis, which includes natural calamities of nature or even pandemic situations like COVID-19, which affect both internal as well as external people in an organization. Fifth, the *smouldering* crisis which is related to any significant business issue that isn't widely known within or outside of the company, gets negative publicity if or when it reaches the public, and has the potential to cost greater than a specific quantity in fines, retribution, legal recompense awards, along with unforeseen costs or expenses. Organizations require a strong strategic approach toward crises so that their reputation faces the least damage. The capability of a company to react in a crisis determines the manner in which it will survive (Oparanma & Wechie, 2014). In such

challenging situations, organizations are responsible for handling the outside environment firmly and effectively.

Crisis management

According to Dirk Glaesser (2006), crisis management can be explained as the proper action plans, methods, and solutions for crises that are successfully implemented to deal with them. Steven Fink (1986), Bill Faulkner (2001) and Brent W. Ritchie (2004) divided crisis management into multiple stages to build up an appropriate strategy. As asserted by Ritchie in 2004, a crisis might be imagined in a three-phase framework over a timeline that enlarges from stage one comprising disaster mitigation to planning to implement recovery strategies and evaluation along with the feedback stage. In 1998, Christine M. Pearson and Judith A. Clair contended that managing crises becomes effective when prospective crises are removed. In 2003, Caroline Sapriel contended that an organization needs to deal with hardships during crises, try to reduce their effects, and along with that, tackle the present situation of crises. In 2004, Ritchie delineated the three levels of managing a crisis as preparing, respond as well as recovering. As organizations are expected to forecast crises and prepare action plans in priority, they also need to react to the crisis in the appropriate period, and once a portion of the damage is identified, certain courses of action need to be implemented. The effectiveness of the recovery procedures is considered the final phase. The strategies can be improved, and for this reason, feedback on those strategies must be run in loops until the problem gets resolved (Ping et al., 2011).

Communication in Organisational Crisis

Dealing with a crisis from the perspective of communication focuses on nature as well as the context of the crisis. According to Sky Marsen (2020), crises vary based on the type, level of company accountability, level of damage, total stakeholders involved, type of industry, and company's current reputation as well as history. Crisis communication involves both practitioners as well as scholars regarding ethics, problem-solving, plan of action, and productive interpersonal communication. The way organisations handle the crisis, and the way they tackle risk are vital jobs for professionals as well as academics researching business correspondence. From the organization's point of view, handling a crisis successfully is vivacious in redeeming the dominance of the company, reinstating the image of the organization, as well as recovering stakeholder belief. From the perspective of academia, testing approaches engaged in the course of a crisis explain the way values, assumptions, as well as intentions are carried out in communication exercises.

Two significant theoretical structures for crisis communication research come into play here. In PR research and practice, it is measures of the organization, during and post-crisis stages. Crisis communication investigators

inspect how organizations react to, describe as well as clarify the crisis situation, the steps they consider to scrutinize the reason for the crisis, methods in which they convey these measures to the public, and avail distinct media to rebuild their bad reputation. The second structure points out crisis prevention upon testing correspondence problems which are guided to the inception as well as upturn of a crisis situation. Surrounded by issue management, methods in this structure scrutinize processes by which evasion of threats as well as misconception can guide to avoidable crises (Normandin & Therrien, 2016).

Role of PR in managing crisis and strategic correspondence

PR is contemplated as an extensive as well as developing profession in society. PR experts must go through the release of information in order to acquire complete understanding and proper coordination among both parties; they should elucidate the crisis to the audience before handling it (Kunczik, 2016; Kamil, 2020). Crises management sketches a set of components planned particularly to evade crises as well as reduce the damage to business and the audiences concerned. The leading plan should be building up a tactic as per the requirement of communication from the perspective of each spectator since the tactic that is set up for the civic inspires the firm to scrutinize its communication process accurately (Petrovici, 2014). Assimilating strategic communication into the organization's PR program gives a much-secured blueprint for success (Fall, 2004; Grunig et al., 2003).

It is difficult to form specific strategies in reaction to a crisis for a company as well as for a PR practitioner working in crisis communication, as crises are very unpredictable. The aims of crisis communication are to reinstate organizational order, impact the public's viewpoint, restore the persona as well as the reputation of the organization, and adopt strategies that ought to *be* outlined to reduce damage to the reputation of an organization. But before coming out with strategies for dealing with the crises, it becomes important to understand the public for whom those strategies are to be made and how they will impact the associated public. During the crisis, it is the public that decides how effective those strategies are.

Understanding the Public in Crisis Communication

The public plays a vital role during times of crisis since the effects of crises are perceived at their maximum in public. Different sets of people will have different opinions on the same problem. As the organization encounters a crisis, the concerned public also faces the repercussions. Coombs and Sherry J. Holladay (2006), Yan Jin and Glen T. Cameron (2007), and Jin and Augustine Pang (2010) deliberated about the public who were overwhelmed by the crisis and their response towards the communication initiated by the organization's crisis communication. At the time of a crisis, the public can have a dual reaction; it can be with the organization or it can be against the firm. If the organization communicates strategi-

cally with its public during a crisis, then the public might have a positive attitude toward the situation and the reputational destruction of the organization can be restored (Benoit, 1995). In PR-grounded crisis communication investigations, the contingency theory proposed by Jin and Cameron (2007) along with the situational crisis communication theory proposed by Coombs and Holladay (2007) has tested the response of the public towards strategies related to crisis communication. Crises lead the public to become unsupportive towards the organization or strengthen associations with it altogether.

Jin et al. (2010) conversed about the public emotions that trigger the conflict of a firm, whether it is unravelling, changing, or shaping. The investigation on Crisis communication ponders the outcome of overall positive as well as negative sentimental conditions on decision methods. Jin and Cameron (2003) presented an espoused appraisal framework of emotions in PR and drew on an abstract imperative viewpoint in contingency theory by constructing emotions in PR theory.

Exercising stances – Contingency Theory

Adhering to the theory of excellence proposed by James E. Grunig and Larissa E. Grunig's (1992) along with Grunig and James E. Hunt (1984), most studies were done on efficacious strategic correspondence. The models of excellence that were postulated are (1) the model of Press Agency which states that the sole concern of an organization is to build its standards as well as familiar products to the detriment of partial veracity; (2) the model of Public Information which is primarily distinguished by the single-sided moving of facts from company to public, here the objective is to give particulars in a reporting manner (just as the journalists do); (3) model of two-way asymmetry which states that in lieu of transferring inflexible data, companies utilize surveys to convince the audience to embrace the viewpoint; (4) model of bidirectional symmetry which asserts that a corporation is compliant in establishing a dialogue with the public. Correspondence occurs either way between corporations and the public, where both are ready to alter their stances, aiming to resolve a crisis in an experienced, ethical, as well as fruitful approach (Grunig & Grunig, 1992; Grunig, 1996).

As asserted by Amanda Cancel et al. (1997), communicating strategically was better depicted explicitly in a continuum. Comprehending strategic correspondence, specifically managing conflicts, from those models of excellence already discussed, the model of two-way symmetry was very restricting (Cameron et al., 2001). There is no comprehensive group of strategic options that are best for every organization (Ginsberg & Venkatraman, 1985), as the best strategy is based on a particular group of conditions (contingencies) like environment, technology, knowledge, tradition, and structure, as well as the size of the organization (Donaldson, 2001; Morton & Hu, 2008; Thai, 2015; Woodward, 1965). The theory of contingency argues that there is no one best

organizational plan, and strategies that are successful under some conditions may not be effective under other (Fiedler, 1964). Alternatively stated, the most favourable organizational technique is contingent on different internal as well as external limitations. Contingency theorists contended that communication conceivably is tested across a continuum wherein companies adopt a specific stance during a particular time frame for the specific public based on the circumstance rather than advocating exercise to a single model or an amalgam of duo models in excellence theory (Jin et al., 2010).

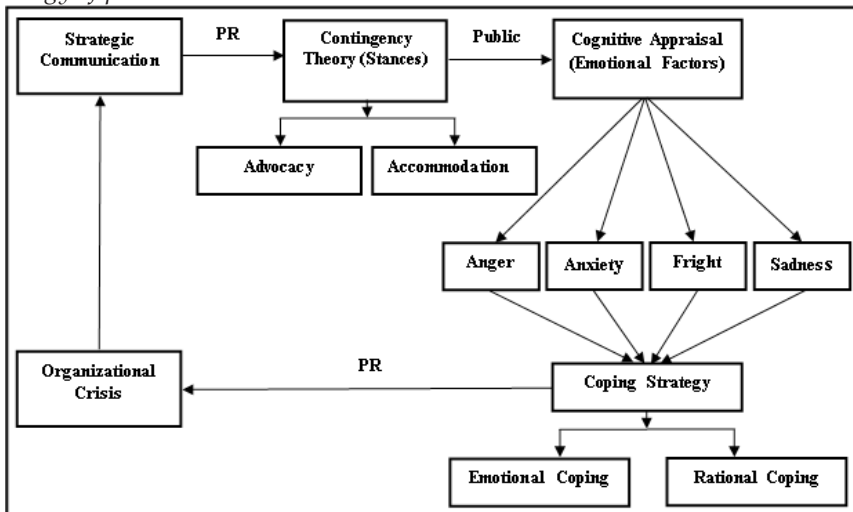
Contingency theory proposes a broad variety of feasible stances along a continuum that a company can adopt concerning the related public. The range of the continuum starts with pure advocacy and ends in pure accommodation. Advocacy describes various stages where companies take stances beneficial to them instead of the audience. Accommodation describes the level at which companies welcome the viewpoint or disagreement of the public (Jeong, 2015). In JiYeon Jeong's (2015) study, the 87 contingent variables that contingency theory suggested were dissected into eleven classifications on two proportions of extrinsic variables (such as threats, surroundings specific to industries, political/societal/cultural situations, external public, as well as problems attributed to query) as well as internal variables (such as company's attributes, PR unit attributes, dominant coalition attributes, internal threats, single attributes, and relationship attributes) (Sarwatay & Paul, 2018). The continuum theory contends that either of the 87 components might influence an organization's position on a continuum at a certain period on the concerned audience (Cancel et al., 1999). Out of 87 variables, specialists contended that certain variables played more noticeably than the rest of the variables. Some factors determined the company's stance on a continuum prior to its transaction with the concerned audience.

In contrast, some variables determined the company's stance on a continuum through the transaction with the public. The former was classified as predisposing factors, whereas the subsequent were situational factors. Few backed predisposing components (Cancel et al., 1999) were established and incorporated: (1) capacity of the business; (2) the company's culture; (3) industry exposure; (4) PR ties to the powerful alliance; (5) traits of important individuals, such as the CEO; and (6) Dominant coalition insight. The above factors were encouraged in conflict studies. To cite an example, organizational culture was an essential component in verifying the articulation of an excellent plan to handle the crisis as well as good crisis management (Marra, 1998). Situational variables impacted the way a company associated with the target audience by attaining transitions out of a favorable accommodative stance with a continuum through correspondence. Some defended situational components comprised: (1) situational urgency; (2) Attributes of the audience; (3) Probable menaces; and (4) Probable expenses and rewards for a company from selecting different stances or positions (Cancel et al., 1999).

Instead of seeing the two-way symmetrical model as the perfect framework, businesses can adopt stances that vary from advocating to accommodating the public during a crisis. This theory encourages companies to go in for strategic examination before and as they commence crisis communication. If communicating during a crisis situation is most effectual when it is integrated into the decision-making exercise (Seeger, 2006), then before companies' PR professionals embrace a stance in correspondence, they need to look into important components while making decisions. Such components are crucial for indicating the nature, purpose, and motivations of corporations (predisposing factors) and external restrictions, requirements, and facts of crises (components based on situation). For instance, if correspondence is impossible amid a crisis, it may indicate that a choice should be made, based on the prevailing issues of companies (anticipated components), blocking it from doing so. Contingency theory suggests strategic evaluation of a characteristic of the public along with the complexity of external threats. It means that if the managing public is predominant, companies and practitioners would apprehend the threat included in crises and the influence of the public. As vagueness, as well as unpredictability, are natural in crises (Seeger, 2006), companies look for ways to aid them in transacting through the danger while comprehending the possibilities available to them. Adopting the stances strategically with a continuum provides companies with a structure to evaluate the incitement of their stances and allows them to sneak a peek at the probable results of their work. (Coombs & Holladay, 2019). Thus, the following model (Figure 1) is proposed, and the propositions are as follows:

Figure 1

Conceptual model of contingency theory during organizational crisis and coping strategy of public



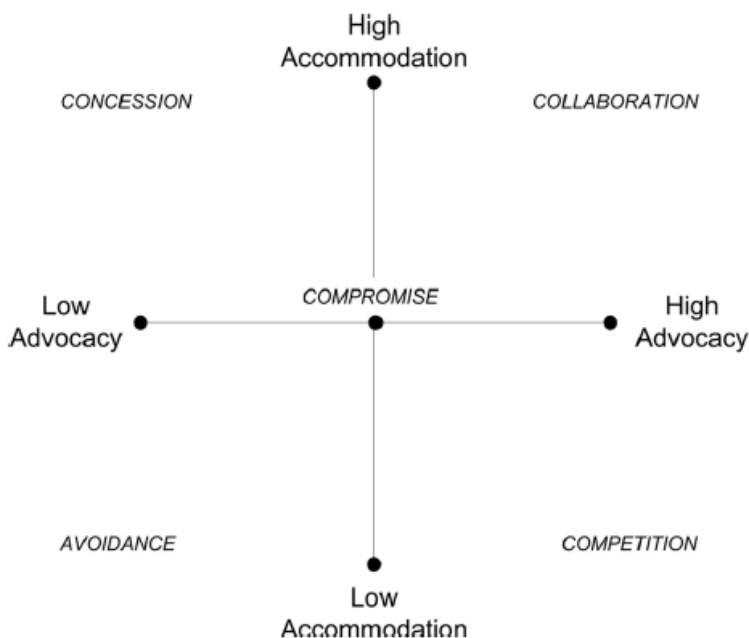
Source. Own research

Any conflict situation can have one of the following possible results, according to Kenneth W. Thomas (1992): a win-win situation, a lose-win situation, a situation of a win-lose, a lose-win situation, and compromise. Results of a win-win situation are considered ideal in the majority of conflict circumstances, but the stances adopted by various parties in a conflict such as advocacy, accommodation, or a combination of both (Cancel et al., 1997) might influence if a dispute resolves with a specific result. Implementing a continuum was a pertinent breakthrough, as it identified how a company could select distinct stances according to the circumstances of a particular conflict as opposed to using the same approach in all situations and with all audiences. The stances and results (win-lose situation, lose-win situation, or a situation of compromise) that take place in individual-issue, distributive negotiating scenarios may be characterized by the advocacy-accommodation continuum. Interestingly, arguments in the real world tend to be much more complicated. In the ideal scenario, advocacy, as well as accommodation, would work in conjunction to promote interdependence (Deutsch, 1973). In these circumstances, cooperation between the organization and the public is ideal for all to accomplish desired results and optimum advantages. It is impossible to represent this kind of cooperative, win-win circumstance by employing a single continuum wherein pure advocacy, as well as pure accommodation, coincide (Christen & Lovaas, 2022; Plowman, 1996; Thomas, 1992).

According to Cindy T. Christen and Steven R. Lovaas (2022), a more feasible approach is to realize that advocacy, as well as accommodation, differ independently and encompass distinct advocacy and accommodation while continuing to reflect the organization's stance. This avoids the conceptually ambiguous explanations of *advocacy underneath accommodation* as well as *accommodation underneath advocacy* that result from attempting to portray contradictory activities within the framework of an individual advocacy-accommodation continuum (Cameron et al., 2001). By separating advocacy from accommodation, a greater range of organizational stances that is impossible to represent by placing advocacy as well as accommodation at contradictory ends of a single continuum can be captured. In handling organizational-public disputes, contingency theory's predictive and prescriptive functionality is consequently improved. On a chart, advocacy, as well as accommodation, can be shown with advocacy on the x-axis along with accommodation on the y-axis, respectively, to indicate the range of organizational stances considered feasible in the circumstances of the conflict. Based on the degree of advocacy as well as accommodation, the two continuums intersect in four quadrants (or sorts of stances), which are shown in Figure 2 and described below (Christen & Lovaas, 2022).

Figure 2

The dual-continuum method: Positioning organisational stance in quadrants of advocacy-accommodation



Source. Adapted from The dual-continuum approach: An extension of the contingency theory of strategic conflict management. *Public Relations Review*, 48(1) by C. T. Christen & S. R. Lovaas, 2022.

Proposition 1: PR professionals must adopt a dual-continuum approach in advocacy and accommodation to take a stance during an organizational conflict.

Cognitive Appraisal and the Public Emotions in Crisis Response

Conceivably, the two ruling crisis strategy theories, Image Repair Strategies by Benoit (Benoit, 2004; Brinson & Benoit, 1999), and Situational Crisis Communication Strategies by Coombs (2007), are outlined to comprehend various strategies that work under different situations. This frequently comes from a situation-based response to the crisis. Coombs' (1998) strategies are placed as per the circumstances established by the crisis type as well as the organization's control point. One side suggests adopting accommodating tactics, such as a full apology when the corporation has strong, distinct control over a crisis situation. On the other hand, defensive tactics such as attack or denial are recommended when a corporation has poor control over a problem. Though the aforesaid situation-specific crisis interventions aid as crucial guidelines to realize crisis circumstances, it is contended that a better comprehensive and universal method would be

framing crisis responses out of an emotion-based aspect to realize various emotional turbulence that the audience related to during a crisis is probable to undergo so that organizations rationalize their methods to handle particular requirements (Jin et al., 2010).

According to Richard Lazarus (1991), emotion is a structured arrangement of cognition, motivation, and relations whose position alters when the interaction between a person and their environment is seen and assessed. Emotions serve as an anchor in the public's understanding of what is unwinding, changing, and moulding during crises, while conflict among the public and organization increases. Jin and Cameron (2003) provided an evolved emotional appraisal framework in PR as well as a vital aspect of conceptualizing contingency theory by constructing emotions in PR theory. They additionally suggested that a specified stance be evaluated as relational engagement with emotional actors that uphold the model indicated in the following features: (1) emotional tone is the direction of emotion, which can be beneficial or detrimental; (2) emotional temperature is measured by the degree of emotion; and (3) The impact of the emotional stimulus in the strategic outcome is referred to as emotional weight (Jin & Cameron, 2003).

A catalyst can elicit emotion in the present moment or in the future as the outcome of a cognitive endeavour or an evaluation of the significance of catalyst. Mainly, an appraisal is an assessment formed on cognitive-formed objectives in a certain circumstance, and relevance mentions the connection between episodes or events and the public's interest. In the absence of an appraisal, no emotion prevails. In consequence, studies have discovered that the public judges as well as decides by examining their emotions and analyzing the meaning of those feelings for the current problem. Their viewpoint on crises is not rigidly the task of an environmental catalyst but includes analysis of the crisis (Carver & Blaney, 1977). Cognitive appraisal is an activity through which an individual assesses a particular experience with their surroundings that applies to their interests (Folkman et al., 1986). Implementing the cognitive appraisal view within crisis correspondence. Jin et al., (2007) constructed an analytical framework was constructed by to recognize the responses to the crisis of key publics, indicated by prevailing emotions induced by various kinds of crises (Jin et al., 2010).

Anger, fright, worry, as well as sadness are recognized as negative emotions that predominate during a crisis and are frequently experienced by the general public. (a) Anger denotes that during a crisis, the key public is inclined to encounter anger when going through a challenging offense from some organization against them. The Public's ego-participation is engrossed to protect or amplify their personality or gain in the circumstance. Generally, there is a matter of criticism that arises from the realization that an organization is responsible for damaging acts and could have averted them. The key public might choose attack as the plan of action while facing the organization. (b) Fright denotes that the fundamental relational issue of fright is going through uncertain and empirical menaces (Lazarus, 1991).

The appropriate way to handle damages and how the related organization might handle the matter are both unknown to the audience. Based on the availability of assets as well as power, they might select avoidance of a crisis as a feasible possibility; (c) Anxiety: It can be defined as experiencing an instant, tangible, and massive risk (Lazarus, 1991). Audience might get overburdened by a crisis as well as look for a rapid remedy. Their ego participation is seen as an effort to defend their self-ego identity against a group they believe to be the root of an empirical challenge. Based on its assessment of the environment, it might or might not criticize the organization's actions. With unpredictability of coping with circumstances as well as the organization's reaction, they tend to ignore as well as get away; (d) One fundamentally related aspect of sadness is that experiencing irreparable harm is a sign of sadness (Lazarus, 1991). Here, the public experiences both substantial and impalpable losses. Their aim of endurance is intimidated, and the dropping of ego-involvement (such as esteem, integrity, ideals, people, and their welfare) prompted by situations far off their dominance might guide them in urgent requirements for relief as well as solace. The organization's decision may have an impact on the public's tendency to take action. There are various degrees of emotions experienced at a particular time regarding specific stimuli. The fundamental stage of emotion is what the audience encounters initially, or immediate, occurrence. Second phase emotion is encountered by the audience in future occurrences as time goes on and depends on how the business responds to an ongoing crisis. Such emotions might be passed on from controlling emotions or concurring emotions besides the primary level (Jin et al., 2010).

Proposition 2: Cognitive appraisal conceptualizes contingency theory by helping to study the emotions of the public and gives a theoretical framework for determining crisis responses.

Coping Strategies of the Public in Response to a Crisis

Coping can be described as communication between an individual's internal assets and external environmental pressure. It is also explained as continuously changing cognitive and behavioural attempts to handle specific insistence that are evaluated as potentially demanding or outstanding an individual's resources. Coping involves efforts to reduce the recognized discrepancy between situational demands and personal resources. The cognitive practice of coping is based on an intellectual approach to how the person evaluates the situation. The extent of appraisal expresses the pressure level and typical coping strategies that the person applies (Sremac, 2008).

As a correlative of the organizational crisis response plan, the public during a crisis inherently validates their plans for coping with negative emotions prompted by crises. The public vigorously undertakes several coping strategies to tackle the crisis, whether they emotionally self-console or modify their thoughts to minimize stress. Strategies to cope with emo-

tions (that is, emotional support as well as venting) are applied when the public primarily encounters sadness or fright in crisis, whatever the crisis foresees, and rational coping mechanisms (action as well as instrumental support) are employed when the public primarily experiences sadness and the situation is foreseeable but unmanageable according to the public. Hence, both emotional and rational approaches are fruitful strategies for the public to handle their negative emotions prompted by crisis circumstances. The practitioners must understand the significance of productive usage of both approaches to impart the most suitable organization-related messages to the public, recognize the ardently segregated public during crises, and modify their responses to a crisis to accelerate the public's successful crisis coping (Jin, 2009).

Proposition 3: The public will form their coping strategies such as emotional and rational coping in response to the crisis.

IMPLICATIONS

The propositions require investigation taking into consideration the existing crisis faced by organisations. Future researchers may conduct research in more depth regarding the advocacy and accommodation used in contingency theory. At the time of a crisis, a PR expert must strategically communicate while keeping in mind the public's emotions and coping mechanisms, as revealed by the present study. A well-established and frequently used emotion in study streams is a cognitive appraisal of emotions (Lazarus, 1991). The cognitive appraisal that can be executed while communicating during a crisis, (Jin et al., 2007) has assisted a theoretical structure in understanding the responses of the primary public during a crisis, as confirmed by dominant emotions induced by diverse crises. It is asserted that organizations must appreciate the emotional stipulates of the crucial public at a variety of rendezvous echelons in different issues for effective crisis management to converse appropriately and coordinate with strategies for coping required by the public (Jin et al., 2007). A deeper study into detrimental emotions such as anger, fright, sadness, as well as anxiety would help PR practitioners build crisis response strategies for dealing with crises. This research might instigate future researchers to explore the linkages between contingency theory and cognitive appraisal in organizational crisis communication.

CONCLUSION

Contingency theory has made a number of important advancements in the fields of conflict management as well as public relations (Cancel et al., 1997). It found 87 predisposing and situational elements that went beyond

conventional public relations and could impact an organization's stance as well as movement in specific conflict scenarios (Christen & Lovaas, 2022). The present work addresses the drawbacks of adopting a sole advocacy-accommodation continuum to represent basic organisational stance as well as modifications in stance; as conflicts among organisation-public grow to further improve the prescriptive as well as analytical usage of contingency theory. The authors contend that, depending on a range of contingent circumstances, advocacy, as well as accommodation, operates independently. The authors claim that a two-continuum approach is required to more thoroughly represent the variety of places and movements that are available to PR practitioners in charge of handling conflicts as well as crises (Christen & Lovaas, 2022). Future research should address the current trends, strategies, and factors that lead to organizational crises. Though the researchers have tried to explore the negative emotions (anger, anxiety, fright, and sadness) and coping strategies, future studies may explore other emotions before making the strategies to tackle crises. The strategies of crisis management could be enhanced to tackle the crisis. It is pertinent to study contingency theory's predisposing along with situational factors that impact the stance of the organization during a conflict. Studying contingent factors in crisis communication and other emotional factors in the public might help the PR profession come up with better crisis management strategies. A crisis may occur at any point in an organization's history. Therefore, PR professionals need to respond immediately to it and prevent damage that might hamper the reputation of the organization. For this reason, how they communicate with their public and stakeholders becomes very crucial during a crisis. Contingency Theory can be useful in this situation. PR professionals must take the audience's emotions into account when speaking with the public during a crisis. PR practitioners must come up with the best coping strategies while responding to the crisis so that they can maintain the reputation of the company through effective communication. Hence, for effective communication to take place, the public's emotions during a crisis and how they cope with them need to be studied.

REFERENCES

- [1] Alzahrani, F. (2016). The role of public relations in organizational crisis management. *International Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research*, 7(1), 1085-1086.
- [2] Benoit, W. L. (1995). *Accounts, excuses, and apologies: A theory of image restoration strategies*. State University Of New York Press.
- [3] Benoit, W. L. (2004). Image restoration discourse and crisis communication. In D. P. Millar, R. L. Heath, (Eds.), *Responding to Crisis: A Rhetorical Approach to Crisis Communication* (pp. 263-280) Lawrence Erlbaum.
- [4] Brinson, S. L., & Benoit, W. L. (1999). The tarnished star: Restoring Texaco's damaged public image. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 12(4), 483-510. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318999124001>
- [5] Broom, G. M. (2006). An open system approach to building theory in public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 18(2), 141-150.

- [6] Cameron, G. T., Cropp, F., & Reber, B. H. (2001). Getting past platitudes: Factors limiting accommodation in public relations. *Journal of Communication Management*, 5(3), 242-261. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13632540110806802>
- [7] Cameron, G. T., Pang, A., & Jin, Y. (2008). Contingency theory: Strategic management of conflict in public relations. In T. Hansen-Horn & B. Neff (Eds.), *Public relations: From theory to practice* (pp. 134-157). Pearson Allyn & Bacon.
- [8] Cancel, A. E., Cameron, G. T., Sallot, L. M., & Mitrook, M. A. (1997). It depends: A contingency theory of accommodation in public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 9(1), 31-63. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjpr0901_02
- [9] Cancel, A. E., Mitrook, M. A., & Cameron, G. T. (1999). Testing the contingency theory of accommodation in public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 25(2), 171-197. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0363-8111\(99\)80161-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0363-8111(99)80161-1)
- [10] Carver, C. S., & Blaney, P. H. (1977). Perceived arousal, focus of attention, and avoidance behavior. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 86(2), 154-162. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-843X.86.2.154>
- [11] Chen, Y. (2020). Comparative study on language features of disastrous news items in China and the west-taking the crash of Boeing 737 MAX as an example. *Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Humanities and Social Science Research (ICHSSR2020)*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200428.022>
- [12] Christen, C. T., & Lovaas, S. R. (2022). The dual-continuum approach: An extension of the contingency theory of strategic conflict management. *Public Relations Review*, 48(1). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2021.102145>
- [13] Coombs, W. T. (1998). An analytic framework for crisis situations: Better responses from a better understanding of the situation. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 10(3), 177-191. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjpr1003_02
- [14] Coombs, W. T. (2007). *Ongoing crisis communication* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- [15] Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2006). Unpacking the halo effect: Reputation and crisis management. *Journal of Communication Management*, 10(2), 123-137. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13632540610664698>
- [16] Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2007). The negative communication dynamic. *Journal of Communication Management*, 11(4), 300-312. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13632540710843913>
- [17] Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2019). *The handbook of crisis communication*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- [18] Deutsch, M. (1973). *The resolution of conflict: Constructive and destructive processes*. Yale University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000276427301700206>
- [19] Donaldson, L. (2001) *The contingency theory of organisations*. Sage.
- [20] Fall, L. T. (2004). The increasing role of public relations as a crisis management function: An empirical examination of communication restructuring efforts among destination organisation managers in the wake of 11th September, 2001. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 10(3), 238-252. <https://doi.org/10.1177/135676670401000304>
- [21] Faulkner, B. (2001). Towards a framework for tourism disaster management. *Tourism Management*, 22(2), 135-147. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0261-5177\(00\)00048-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0261-5177(00)00048-0)
- [22] Fearn-Banks, K. (2002). *Crisis Communications: A Casebook Approach* (Routledge Communication Series) (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- [23] Fearn-Banks, K. (2007). *Crisis communications: A casebook approach*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- [24] Fiedler, F. (1964). A contingency model of leadership effectiveness. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 149-190. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0065-2601\(08\)60051-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0065-2601(08)60051-9)
- [25] Fink, S. (1986). *Crisis management: Planning for the inevitable*. American Association of Management.
- [26] Folkman, S., Lazarus, R. S., Gruen, R. J., & DeLongis, A. (1986). Appraisal, coping, health status, and psychological symptoms. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50(3), 571-579. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.50.3.571>
- [27] Ginsberg, A., & Venkatraman, N. (1985). Contingency perspectives of organisational strategy: A critical review of the empirical research. *Academy of Management Review*, 10(3), 421-434. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258125>

- [28] Glaesser, D. (2006). *Crisis management in the tourism industry*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780080464596>
- [29] Grunig, J. E., & Grunig, L. A. (1992). Models of public relations and communications. In J. E. Grunig (Ed.), *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (pp. 285-326). Lawrence Erlbaum.
- [30] Grunig, J. E., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. Holt.
- [31] Grunig, L. A. (1996). Public relations. In M. D. Salwen & D. W. Stacks (Eds.), *An integrated approach to communication theory and research* (pp. 459-477). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- [32] Grunig, L. A., Dozier, D. M., & Grunig, J. E. (2003). *Excellent public relations and effective organizations*. Routledge.
- [33] Jeong, J. (2015). Enhancing organisational survivability in a crisis: Perceived organisational crisis responsibility, stance, and strategy. *Sustainability*, 7(9), 11532-11545. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su70911532>
- [34] Jin, Y. (2009). The effects of public's cognitive appraisal of emotions in crises on crisis coping and strategy assessment. *Public Relations Review*, 35(3), 310-313. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2009.02.003>
- [35] Jin, Y., & Cameron, G. T. (2003). Rediscovering emotion in public relations: An adapted appraisal model and an emotion-laden contingency plane [Unpublished manuscript].
- [36] Jin, Y., & Cameron, G. T. (2007). The effects of threat type and duration on public relations practitioner's cognitive, affective, and conative responses in crisis situations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 19(3), 255-281. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10627260701331762>
- [37] Jin, Y., & Pang, A. (2010). Future directions of crisis communication research: Emotions in crisis - the next frontier. In W. T. Coombs & S. J. Holladay (Eds.), *The handbook of crisis communication* (pp. 677-682). Wiley-Blackwell. https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/lkcsb_research/6037
- [38] Jin, Y., Pang, A., & Cameron, G. T. (2006). Strategic communication in crisis governance: Analysis of the Singapore management of the SARS crisis. *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*, 23(1), 81-104. <https://doi.org/10.22439/cjas.v23i1.693>
- [39] Jin, Y., Pang, A., & Cameron, G. T. (2007). Integrated crisis mapping: Towards a publics-based, emotion-driven conceptualisation in crisis communication. *Sphera Publica*, 7, 81-96.
- [40] Jin, Y., Pang, A., & Cameron, G. T. (2010). The role of emotions in crisis responses: Inaugural test of the integrated crisis mapping (ICM) model. *Corporate Communications*, 15(4), 428-452. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13563281011085529>
- [41] Kamil, A. (2020). Role of public relations in crisis management with the coronavirus crisis as an example: A case study on the UAE. *Global Media Journal*, 18(35).
- [42] Kunczik, M. (2016). *Images of nations and international public relations*. Routledge.
- [43] Lazarus, R. S. (1991). Cognition and motivation in emotion. *American Psychologist*, 46(4), 352-367. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.46.4.352>
- [44] Marra, F. J. (1998). Crisis communication plans: Poor predictors of excellent crisis public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 24(4), 461-474. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0363-8111\(99\)80111-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0363-8111(99)80111-8)
- [45] Morton, N. A., & Hu, Q. (2008). Implications of the fit between organisational structure and ERP: a structural contingency theory perspective. *International Journal of Information Management*, 28(5), 391-402. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2008.01.008>
- [46] Marsen, S. (2020). Navigating crisis: The role of communication in organisational crisis. *International Journal of Business Communication*, 57(2), 163-175. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2329488419882981>
- [47] Millar, D. P., & Heath, R. L. (Eds.). (2004). *Responding to crisis: A rhetorical approach to crisis communication*. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- [48] Normandin, J., & Therrien, M. (2016). Resilience factors reconciled with complexity: The dynamics of order and disorder. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 24(2), 107-118. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5973.12107>
- [49] Oparanma, O. A., & Wechie, I. (2014). Crisis management processes to ensure effective and continuous performance. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, 16(8), 01-04. <https://doi.org/10.9790/487x-16830104>
- [50] Pang, A., Cropp, F., & Cameron, G. T. (2006). Corporate crisis planning: Tensions, issues, and contradictions. *Journal of Communication Management*, 10(4), 371-389. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13632540610714818>

- [51] Pang, A., Jin, Y., & Cameron, G. T. (2010a). Strategic management of communication: Insights from the contingency theory of strategic conflict management. In R. H. Heath (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of public relations* (pp. 17-34). Sage Publications.
- [52] Pang, A., Jin, Y., & Cameron, G. T. (2010b, March 10-13). *Contingency theory of strategic conflict management: Unearthing factors that influence ethical elocution in crisis communication* [Conference Presentation]. 13th International Public Relations Research Conference, Coral Gables, FL, United States. https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/lkcsb_research/6095
- [53] Pang, A., Jin, Y., Kim, S., & Cameron, G. T. (2020). Contingency theory: Evolution from a public relations theory to a theory of strategic conflict management. In F. Frandsen & W. Johansen (Eds.), *Crisis communication* (pp. 141-164). De Gruyter Mouton.
- [54] Pearson, C. M., & Clair, J. A. (1998). Reframing crisis management. *The Academy of Management Review*, 23(1), 59-76. <https://doi.org/10.2307/259099>
- [55] Petrovici, A. (2014). PR in crisis situations. A case study. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 149, 714-718. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.08.269>
- [56] Pieczka, M., & L'Etang, J. (2006). Public relations and the question of professionalism. In R. L. Heath (Ed.), *Handbook of Public Relations* (pp. 223-235). Sage Publications.
- [57] Ping, J. W., Cui, T., & Pan, S. L. (2011). Strategies of crisis management from contingent perspective. PACIS 2011 - 15th Pacific Asia Conference on Information Systems: Quality Research in Pacific
- [58] Plowman, K. D. (1996). Negotiation and two-way models of public relations [Paper presentation]. Annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.
- [59] Reber, B., & Cameron, G. T. (2003). Measuring contingencies: Using scales to measure public relations practitioner limits to accommodation. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 80(2), 431-446. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900308000212>
- [60] Ritchie, B. W. (2004). Chaos, crises and disasters: A strategic approach to crisis management in the tourism industry. *Tourism Management*, 25(6), 669-683. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2003.09.004>
- [61] Sapriel, C. (2003). Effective crisis management: Tools and best practice for the new millennium. *Journal of Communication Management*, 7(4), 348-355. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13632540310807485>
- [62] Sarwatay, D., & Paul, N. (2018). Crisis communication and contingency theory: What we can learn from Nestlé Maggi's case. *Indore Management Journal*, 10(2), 47-61.
- [63] Seeger, M. W. (2006). Best practices in crisis communication: An expert panel process. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 34(3), 232-244. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00909880600769944>
- [64] Shin, J., Cameron, G. T., & Cropp, F. (2006). Occam's razor in the contingency theory: A national survey on 86 contingent variables. *Public Relations Review*, 32(3), 282-286. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2006.05.005>
- [65] Sremac, S. (2008). Theoretical approaches to coping with crises and conversion. *Religija i Tolerancija*, 6(10), 55-69. <http://scindeks.ceon.rs/article.aspx?artid=1451-87590810055S>
- [66] Sullivan, S. (2003). Crisis communication. *Harvard Business Review*, 28, 103-109.
- [67] Thai, M. (2015). Contingency perspective. In C. L. Cooper (Ed.), *Wiley encyclopedia of management* (3rd Ed). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118785317.wcom060036>
- [68] Thomas, K. W. (1992). Conflict and negotiation processes in organisations. In M. D. Dunnette & L. M. Hough (Eds.), *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology* (pp. 651-717). Consulting Psychologists Press.
- [69] Woodward, J. (1965) *Industrial organization: Theory and practice*. Oxford University Press.
- [70] Yarbrough, C. R., Cameron, G. T., Sallot, L. M., & McWilliams, A. (1998). Tough calls to make: Contingency theory and the Centennial Olympic Games. *Journal of Communication Management*, 3(1), 39-56. <https://doi.org/10.1108/eb023483>