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Crisis Communication Strategies in AI-Based Crises: A Qualitative Case Study of Amazon through the Lens of Situational Crisis Communication Theory

Yapay Zekâ Tabanlı Krizlerde Kriz İletişimi Stratejileri: Durumsal Kriz İletişimi Kuramı Çerçevesinde Amazon Üzerine Nitel Bir Vaka AnaliziSkills

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the communication dynamics of artificial intelligence (AI)–driven crises through the lens of Amazon's AI-based hiring algorithm. Conducted from the perspective of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), the research analyzes the unique structure of algorithmic crises and reveals the limitations of traditional crisis communication models in AI-driven contexts. Designed as a qualitative case study, the research analyzed 17 documents—including media reports, corporate statements, SEC filings, and DEI reports—published between 2018 and 2024 using discourse and thematic analysis techniques supported by MAXQDA software. The findings indicate that Amazon's initial response, based on a mitigation strategy involving system shutdown, was undermined by prolonged silence and limited disclosure. This combination contradicted the SCCT principles of transparency and accountability, reinforcing the perception of an avoidant corporate stance. Moreover, the "black box" opacity of AI systems hinders transparent communication, while media framing significantly shapes public crisis perception. The study highlights that SCCT alone falls short in addressing such hybrid crises; rather than relying solely on mitigation strategies, early measures prioritizing transparency, independent auditing, and compensation mechanisms are essential for rebuilding organizational trust. In this context, the research proposes a Multidimensional Algorithmic Crisis Communication Framework, integrating technical transparency, ethical responsibility, stakeholder participation, and solution-oriented discourse. This framework contributes to the expansion of SCCT in AI-related crises and offers institutions a renewed perspective on trust-building through proactive risk communication.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Situational Crisis Communication Theory, Amazon, Algorithmic Bias, Maxqda.

ÖZ

Bu araştırma, yapay zekâ tabanlı krizlerin iletişim dinamiklerini, Amazon'un cinsiyete dayalı ayrımcılık yapan işe alım algoritması vakası üzerinden incelemektedir. Durumsal Kriz İletişimi Kuramı (SCCT) perspektifinden yürütülen çalışma, algoritmik krizlerin benzersiz yapısını analiz ederek, geleneksel kriz iletişimi modellerinin yapay zekâ bağlamındaki sınırlılıklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Nitel bir vaka çalışması olarak tasarlanan araştırmada, 2018–2024 yılları arasında yayımlanmış medya haberleri, kurumsal açıklamalar, SEC belgeleri ve DEI raporlarından oluşan 17 belge, MAXQDA yazılımı kullanılarak söylem ve tematik analiz teknikleriyle incelenmiştir. Bulgular, sistemin kapatılmasına dayanan azaltma stratejisiyle yürütülen Amazon'un ilk tepkisinin, uzun süren sessizlik ve sınırlı bilgi paylaşımı nedeniyle etkisiz kaldığını göstermektedir. Bu durum, SCCT'nin şeffaflık ve hesap verebilirlik ilkeleriyle çelişmiş ve kurumun kaçınmacı bir tutum sergilediği algısını güçlendirmiştir. Ayrıca YZ sistemlerinin "kara kutu" niteliğindeki karmaşık yapısı, şeffaf iletişimi zorlaştırırken medya çerçevelemesi kamuoyundaki kriz algısını önemli ölçüde şekillendirmiştir. Çalışma, SCCT'nin bu hibrit krizlerde tek başına yeterli kalmadığını; yalnızca azaltma stratejilerine başvurmak yerine, erken dönemde şeffaflığı önceleyen adımlar, bağımsız denetim süreçleri ve sorumluluk üstlenmeye yönelik telafi mekanizmalarıyla yönetilmesinin, kurumsal güvenin yeniden inşası açısından kritik olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Bu bağlamda araştırma, teknik şeffaflık, etik sorumluluk, paydaş katılımı ve çözüm odaklı iletişimi bütünleştiren "Çok Boyutlu Algoritmik Kriz İletişimi Kuramsal Çerçevesi" ni önermektedir. Bu çerçeve, SCCT'nin yapay zekâ krizleri bağlamında genişletilmesine katkı sağlamakta; kurumlara, proaktif risk iletişimiyle güven oluşturulmasına yönelik yeni bir bakış açısı kazandırmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: : Yapay zekâ, Durumsal Kriz İletişimi Kuramı, Amazon, algoritmik önyargı, MAXQDA.

Introduction

The rapid integration of AI technologies into corporate processes as part of digital transformation has introduced new potential crises and complex ethical dilemmas for organizations. The use of machine learning algorithms in decision-making areas such as recruitment, credit evaluation, and content moderation increases the risk of systemic bias and discrimination, threatening organizational reputation (Chen et al., 2023). The complex and "black-box" nature of AI systems obscures their functioning, creating uncertainty about accountability and ethical oversight, and limiting organizations' ability to communicate transparently and maintain accountability during crises. Consequently, scholars increasingly argue that traditional crisis communication theories may be inadequate for addressing the challenges of emerging technologies (Park & Yoon, 2025).

AI crises are not merely technical failures but hybrid events with ethical, legal, and social dimensions (Floridi & Cowls, 2019). Cases of algorithmic bias can undermine the perceived impartiality of decision-making systems and harm public perceptions of corporate responsibility. Research shows that such crises often lead to faster legitimacy loss and slower recovery compared to traditional ones. AI-driven public relations practices also introduce new challenges for reputation management, while the ethical aspects of these technologies pose significant risks for strategic communication (Zararsız, 2024). Therefore, exploring the communicative dimension of AI crises has become essential for ensuring organizational accountability and public trust.

In recent years, there has been a growing body of research examining the impact of media framing on crisis management in AI-driven crises (Boyd & Crawford, 2012; Nguyen & Hekman, 2024). The media plays a crucial role in these crises by conveying technical information to the public, scrutinizing corporate statements, and shaping public opinion. Particularly in the case of high-profile global corporations, media frames can become so influential that they directly determine the trajectory of corporate reputation. Hence, the communication dimension of AI-related crises should be analyzed not only through technical interventions but also through strategic perception management and trust-building efforts.

While crisis communication literature offers robust frameworks for traditional organizational crises, research on the unique dynamics of AI-driven crises remains limited. In particular, there is a notable gap regarding how established theories—such as the SCCT—apply to the ethical challenges of algorithmic systems. In Turkey, studies on AI and crises have mainly focused on disaster management and extraordinary events like the Covid-19 pandemic (Özgür, 2024). Few works address algorithmic bias directly: Dondurucu and Çetinkaya (2023) conducted a bibliometric analysis on digital news production, Oğuz (2024) examined algorithmic discrimination from a labor law perspective, and Bozkurt Gümrükçüoğlu and Ahter Yakacak (2023) discussed biases in recruitment processes leading to systematic discrimination. Despite these contributions, there remains a lack of in-depth analyses exploring hybrid crises through the SCCT framework, revealing a clear gap in both corporate communication and AI-focused crisis management literature.

Against this backdrop, in 2018, it was revealed that Amazon's AI-powered recruitment system had developed a systematic bias against female candidates. According to reports by international media outlets such as *Reuters* and *The Guardian*, the system had learned from past hiring data and began scoring women's résumés unfavorably — even interpreting terms containing the word "women" as negative indicators. Although Amazon deactivated the algorithm once the issue was discovered, the incident sparked widespread debates on "technological discrimination" and led to serious criticism of the company's ethical responsibilities and data management practices. This case is regarded as a striking example of how biases can be reproduced within AI-driven decision-making systems.

In this vein, the present study analyzes Amazon's corporate discourse surrounding the crisis caused by its AI driven hiring algorithm, which came to public attention in 2018 and was found to have exhibited gender bias. The analysis is conducted through the lens of the SCCT, using a discourse analysis approach. This research aims to provide a conceptual framework for understanding how organizations prepare for crises emerging from increasingly prevalent algorithmic systems and which communication strategies they employ during such crises.

In this context, the study focuses on the following research questions:

- **Question 1:** What discourse tone did Amazon adopt in its public communication during the gender bias crisis?
- **Question 2:** What crisis communication strategy did Amazon develop to protect its corporate reputation throughout the crisis?
- **Question 3:** How were key concepts such as algorithmic bias, transparency, ethical responsibility, and solution-oriented action addressed in the company's public disclosures?
- **Question 4:** Based on the Amazon case, what communication-related implications can be drawn for corporate reputation management in AI-related crises?

This study aims to contribute theoretically to the crisis communication literature and provide practical recommendations that support organizational trust in the management of AI-induced crises.

Conceptual Framework

Algorithmic Bias and AI-Based Crises

The growing integration of AI into corporate decision-making has introduced new types of crises. One prominent example is algorithmic bias, defined as systematic discrimination based on characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, or age. Biases arising in areas that directly affect human lives—like recruitment, credit evaluation, or content moderation—are not merely technical flaws but ethical and organizational issues that can escalate into reputation-threatening crises (Mehrabi et al., 2021; Crawford et al., 2019).

The roots of algorithmic bias lie not only in datasets but also in the structural assumptions embedded in the design, development, and interpretation of technology itself (Friedman & Nissenbaum, 1996). Algorithms trained on data containing historical inequalities based on gender, race, or class tend to reproduce these patterns, transferring discrimination into the digital domain through seemingly neutral systems (Noble, 2018). Especially gender-based algorithmic biases demonstrate that technology should be approached not only as a technical but also as a socio-cultural phenomenon. The study by Buolamwini and Gebru (2018) on facial recognition systems revealed high accuracy rates for light-skinned males but significantly higher error rates for dark-skinned females. Similarly, Caliskan, Bryson, and Narayanan (2017) found that natural language processing algorithms reproduce stereotypical associations linking women with domestic roles and men with science and careers. These findings confirm that AI systems do more than analyze existing data — they also have the potential to perpetuate historical inequalities.

In this context, D'Ignazio and Klein's (2020) data feminism framework offers a critical lens on algorithmic bias, emphasizing the importance of recognizing power relations at every stage of data science processes. The lack of diversity within technology development teams allows social biases to be unconsciously embedded into code, leading to the systemic reproduction of gender-based discrimination (Zou & Schiebinger, 2018). One of the most visible areas where these biases manifest is human resources management. Findings by Raghavan et al. (2020) indicate that, despite claims of reducing bias, such systems remain insufficient in eliminating deep structural inequalities. Thus, algorithmic bias represents not merely a technical design issue but a multidimensional crisis potential

rooted in historical organizational practices, social inequalities, and their reproduction through digitalization.

The production of discriminatory outcomes by AI-based systems imposes not only ethical but also legal and financial responsibilities on organizations. Pasquale (2015) argues that the opaque nature of algorithms hinders the early detection of crises, while Martin (2019) suggests that algorithmic discrimination crises evolve through three stages: latent bias, public exposure, and full-scale corporate crisis. This indicates that algorithmic systems should be evaluated not only in terms of technical accountability but also within the framework of corporate ethical governance. As exemplified by the Amazon case, such processes can evolve from a software malfunction into a corporate trust crisis (Dastin, 2018). Selbst et al. (2019) emphasize that the primary cause of such crises lies in the insufficient analysis of the social contexts surrounding technical systems, while Mittelstadt et al. (2016) demonstrate that neglecting ethical responsibilities results in a long-term erosion of stakeholder trust.

Studies show that algorithmic systems, despite appearing neutral, can violate anti-discrimination laws and intensify corporate crises through legal disputes and compensation liabilities (Barocas & Selbst, 2016; Ajunwa, 2021; Jobin, Ienca, & Vayena, 2019). The distinct feature of AI-related crises lies in their dual technical and ethical nature: algorithmic bias represents both a software failure and an ethical breach. This duality compels organizations to move beyond technical fixes and develop communication strategies grounded in transparency, accountability, and trust-building (Raji et al., 2020). From an SCCT perspective, unforeseen software errors correspond to the "accidental" cluster, whereas negligence in data handling or auditing aligns with the "preventable crisis" category (Coombs, 2007). Therefore, effective communication in AI-driven crises requires a holistic approach that integrates ethical responsibility, stakeholder trust, and organizational learning rather than focusing solely on technical correction.

AI Ethics, Corporate Responsibility, and Communication

The integration of AI systems into corporate processes introduces not only technological innovation but also ethical and communicative responsibilities. In this context, corporate reputation management depends not solely on the technical performance of systems but also on communication processes grounded in ethical principles such as transparency, fairness, and accountability.

The Responsible AI approach emphasizes that algorithms should be fair, transparent, and accountable. Yet, ethical principles should not remain internal policy documents; they must be publicly communicated in clear language and supported by concrete mechanisms (Hagendorff, 2020). Such proactive communication strengthens corporate trust before crises and facilitates confidence restoration afterward (Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

At the international level, emerging regulatory frameworks have institutionalized corporate ethics as a governance requirement. The European Union's AI Act mandates transparency, safety, and human rights compliance for high-risk systems, while the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) enforces transparency in automated profiling to protect individuals' rights (European Commission, 2021; Wachter et al., 2017). Compliance with these frameworks not only reduces legal risk but also reinforces the image of responsible corporate citizenship.

AI ethics guidelines provide a foundation for pre-crisis preparation. Reviewing 84 global frameworks, Jobin, Ienca, and Vayena (2019) identified transparency, fairness, non-maleficence, responsibility, and privacy as core values. However, true accountability requires operational implementation. The EU's risk-based approach obliges organizations to classify AI systems by risk level and adopt stricter safeguards for high-

risk applications (Veale & Zuiderveen Borgesius, 2021). Thus, ethical governance extends beyond internal policy to regulatory compliance. Ensuring fairness in both processes and outcomes is central to building trust (Yeung, Howes, & Pogrebna, 2020; Selbst & Barocas, 2018).

Transparent communication of these principles plays a key role in preventing AI-driven crises. Transparency involves not only explaining algorithms technically but also disclosing data sources, human oversight, and decision-making mechanisms (Ananny & Crawford, 2018). Diakopoulos (2020) highlights that algorithmic transparency mitigates informational gaps during crises.

The Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) approach supports transparency by emphasizing not just technical clarity but also trust-building (Adadi & Berrada, 2018). Miller (2019) adds that explainability must address social understanding as well as technical accuracy. Within crisis communication, Coombs (2019) finds that early self-disclosure increases credibility, while Shin and Park (2019) show that ethical, transparent messaging enhances trust and long-term reputation. Similarly, Kim and Krishna (2018) argue that transparency across information, participation, and accountability dimensions supports trust-based crisis communication.

Nonetheless, transparency must be balanced with privacy, intellectual property, and security concerns (Felzmann et al., 2019; Zarsky, 2013; Whittaker et al., 2018). As the Amazon recruitment algorithm case shows, insufficient disclosure can turn ethical responsibility into a reputational crisis trigger (Dastin, 2018).

Integrating ethical governance into corporate communication requires managing crises not only technically but also discursively (Gillespie, 2018). The language organizations use directly shapes how they assume responsibility, demonstrate transparency, and build trust (Grunig, 2009). Ethically grounded communication should therefore go beyond information provision—embracing empathy, accountability, and a learning-oriented narrative that reflects a responsible corporate identity (Seeger, 2006). By doing so, organizations can transcend technical explanations and sustain ethically sensitive reputation management during AI-driven crises (Bostrom & Yudkowsky, 2014; Mittelstadt et al., 2016).

SCCT and AI-Driven Crises

SCCT provides a framework that guides organizations in developing appropriate communication strategies to protect their reputation based on the type of crisis and the level of perceived responsibility (Coombs, 2007). Rooted in Attribution Theory, SCCT argues that stakeholders' assessments of the cause and controllability of a crisis determine the degree of responsibility attributed to the organization, which in turn shapes the selection of response strategies (Coombs, 2004). According to SCCT, as the level of responsibility attributed to the organization increases, institutions must adopt more accommodative and corrective strategies to maintain their reputation (Coombs, 2007).

SCCT posits that crisis perception depends on three key variables: the type of crisis, the level of responsibility attributed to the organization, and the organization's prior reputation. Coombs (2007) classifies crises into three main clusters. The victim cluster includes events such as natural disasters or rumors beyond the organization's control and is associated with a low level of responsibility. The accidental cluster covers crises arising from technical errors or unintentional human mistakes, implying a moderate level of responsibility. The preventable cluster, on the other hand, includes crises stemming from negligence, unethical behavior, or lack of oversight, which carry a high level of responsibility.

SCCT defines four primary response strategies appropriate to these clusters: deny (rejecting responsibility), diminish(reducing perceived responsibility through

explanations), rebuild (offering apology, compensation, or corrective action), and bolster (reminding stakeholders of past achievements or positive attributes) (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). The effectiveness of these strategies depends on their alignment with the crisis type. In crises with high perceived responsibility, denial or diminishment strategies tend to exacerbate reputational loss, whereas apology, compensation, and corrective actions are more effective in restoring stakeholder trust (Coombs, 2007; Alsop, 2004). Empirical research conducted in Turkey also supports this view. Duğan and Koç (2020) found that adopting apology-based and corrective strategies after a crisis positively influences perceived organizational reputation.

AI-driven crises, however, challenge SCCT's traditional categories due to their hybrid nature. For example, algorithmic bias cases may stem simultaneously from technical malfunctions (accidental cluster) and from ethical neglect or lack of oversight (preventable cluster), necessitating the simultaneous application of diminish and rebuild strategies (Syed, 2020). The "black-box" nature of AI systems and delayed organizational responses intensify perceptions of responsibility and accelerate the erosion of public trust (Martin, 2019). Therefore, purely technical fixes are insufficient; organizations must also demonstrate accountability through transparent reporting, independent audits, and policy reforms (Raji et al., 2020; Hagendorff, 2020). In this regard, Darı and Koçyiğit (2024) emphasize that the diffusion of AI technologies blurs ethical boundaries and redefines organizational responsibility, calling for clearer frameworks of accountability in corporate communication.

Amazon's AI-assisted recruitment crisis exemplifies this hybrid structure. The company deactivated its biased system, offering a technical solution; however, its prolonged silence and limited disclosure reinforced perceptions of "avoiding accountability" (Dastin, 2018). This case illustrates that technical interventions alone are insufficient for reputation repair and that hybrid strategies combining transparency and trust-building are essential. Within the SCCT framework, Amazon's AI hiring case can primarily be situated within the *preventable cluster*, as the crisis stemmed from insufficient oversight and the neglect of ethical responsibility. At the same time, its technical dimension also reflects characteristics of the *accidental cluster*, creating a hybrid crisis structure that complicates responsibility attribution.

AI-driven crises go beyond the traditional crisis dynamics assumed by SCCT. While the theory primarily focuses on post-crisis stages (Coombs, 2007), algorithmic crises reveal a complex interplay of technical, ethical, and organizational dimensions (Mittelstadt et al., 2016; Martin, 2019). In such crises, responsibility stems not only from organizational actions during the event but also from prior decisions related to data management, algorithm design, and oversight (Selbst & Barocas, 2018). Consequently, SCCT does not fully encompass pre-crisis variables such as foresight, monitoring, and ethical governance (Buhmann, Paßmann, & Fieseler, 2020). Moreover, since responsibility dynamics in AI-related crises evolve over time, SCCT's linear and single-phase approach fails to capture this complexity (Stark & Crawford, 2021).

Therefore, managing AI-driven crises requires a hybrid model integrating technical remediation with ethical accountability and transparent communication (Raji et al., 2020). While SCCT provides a valuable framework for understanding post-crisis communication dynamics, AI-related crises demand an expanded interpretation incorporating algorithmic transparency, ethical responsibility, and proactive governance (Sætra, 2021; Wachter, Mittelstadt, & Russell, 2018). In conclusion, applying SCCT to AI-driven crises necessitates a multidimensional communication approach that unites technical intervention with ethical responsibility. Such an approach not only mitigates reputational damage during the crisis but also contributes to the long-term restoration of organizational trust (Garson, 2020; Janssen et al., 2020).

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative case study design based on the document analysis approach. The case focuses on Amazon's AI-assisted hiring crisis, which became public in 2018 when reports revealed that the algorithm used in résumé screening systematically disadvantaged female candidates due to male-dominated training data (Dastin, 2018). Beyond being a technical malfunction, the crisis raised issues of ethical responsibility, corporate transparency, and reputation management.

Amazon's algorithm, developed in 2014 to automate recruitment, was quietly deactivated after the bias became public, reinforcing perceptions of a defensive stance and avoidance of accountability. Given the multidimensional nature of the case—combining corporate discourse, ethics, and crisis communication—an in-depth qualitative analysis was deemed appropriate.

The document analysis method employed in this study involves the systematic examination of written, visual, or digital materials produced without the researcher's direct involvement (Kıral, 2020). The analyzed materials included various types of documents related to the Amazon crisis, such as media reports, corporate statements and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) reports.

The theoretical foundation of the study is based on the SCCT, which was used to interpret crisis communication strategies. The documents were examined using discourse and thematic analysis techniques supported by MAXQDA software. The analysis, conducted through codes developed in line with SCCT's strategic categories, revealed key themes such as communication tone, ethical responsibility, transparency, stakeholder pressure, and algorithmic accountability.

Data Sources and Sample

The study sample comprises 17 publicly accessible and independent documents that reflect Amazon's AI-driven hiring algorithm crisis during the period 2018–2024.

The documents presented in Table 1 were selected to provide a multidimensional understanding of Amazon's crisis process and its corporate communication strategies. These documents were categorized into two groups: Corporate Documents (Amazon's official statements, blog posts, DEI reports, and SEC filings) and Independent Sources (news and analytical content published by reputable media organizations such as Reuters, BBC, MIT Technology Review, and The Verge).

The document selection process was based on four main criteria. First, priority was given to documents directly related to the crisis, particularly those containing technical details about the hiring algorithm, gender-based bias, and corporate defenses. Second, documents reflecting Amazon's crisis discourse, defensive strategies, and implemented action plans were included. Third, attention was paid to selecting documents that contributed to thematic dimensions such as corporate reputation management, ethical responsibility, transparency, and communication tone. Finally, reliability was considered a key selection criterion, with preference given to documents published by recognized media outlets or official corporate sources.

This methodological approach enabled a systematic evaluation of the documents analyzed within the scope of the study.

Data Collection Process

Data collection was carried out between May and July 2025. To access relevant sources, keywords such as *"Amazon AI hiring bias," "algorithmic discrimination Amazon," "Amazon diversity statement,"* and *"Amazon SEC AI report"* were used. The retrieved documents were reviewed for content quality; duplicate or superficial texts were excluded. Only documents with high representativeness, analytical richness, and discourse diversity were included in the data set. Particular attention was paid to selecting documents that reflected the crisis chronologically and captured different types of organizational discourse.

Data Analysis Process

The data were analyzed using MAXQDA software. In the initial stage, all documents were read, and preliminary codes were generated through an inductive approach. These codes were then grouped into themes based on their semantic proximity. The resulting themes were aligned with the strategy categories of "avoidance," "diminishment," and "rebuilding" within the SCCT framework. Code–theme associations were presented in tables, and each theme was accompanied by explanatory notes and illustrative statements to enhance transparency in the analytical process. Additionally, a word frequency analysis was conducted, and the most frequently occurring concepts were visualized using a word cloud. This visual representation helped reinforce the key themes identified in the crisis-related discourse.

Findings

A thematic analysis of Amazon's corporate discourse regarding its AI-driven hiring crisis revealed that the company's communication strategies were characterized by a complex and multi-layered structure. An examination of 17 documents conducted with MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software identified six main themes and twelve sub-themes, within which a total of 135 codes were assigned. As previously outlined, Amazon faced intense public criticism in 2018 when its AI-based recruitment algorithm was found to systematically disadvantage female candidates. This contextual background provides the foundation for interpreting the following findings, as the analysis focuses on understanding the company's strategic and cultural discourse in response to the crisis. To address the research questions, a code distribution model was applied

Table 1

Documents Analyzed to Examine Amazon's AI-Driven Crisis

Document Title	Publication Year	Source	Document Type	Thematic Contribution	Access Link
Amazon AI Hiring Bias - BBC Report	2018	BBC	News Article	Media coverage of algorithmic bias	https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-45809919
Reuters: Amazon's AI Gender Discrimination	2018	Reuters	News Article	First disclosure and public perception	https://www.reuters.com/article/world/insight-amazon-scraps-secret-ai-recruiting-tool-that-showed-bias-against-women-idUSKCN1MK0AG/
The Guardian: Amazon ditched AI recruiting tool that favored men for technical jobs	2018	The Guardian	News Article	Expanded Reuters' coverage with context on women's exclusion from algorithmic scoring, emphasizing global gender diversity issues.	https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/oct/10/amazon-hiring-ai-gender-bias-recruiting-engine
MIT Technology Review on Amazon AI	2018	MIT Technology Review	Technology Report	Explained technical causes of algorithmic bias; highlighted biased training data as the core issue and linked AI ethics to data governance.	https://www.technologyreview.com/2018/10/10/139858/amazon-ditched-ai-recruitment-software-because-it-was-biased-against-women/
The Verge - Hiring Algorithm Analysis	2018	The Verge	Technology News	Reinforced earlier reports, connecting bias to lack of explainability in AI; introduced the notion of "machine trust illusion."	https://www.theverge.com/2018/10/10/17958784/ai-recruiting-tool-bias-amazon-report
ACLU: Why Amazon's Automated Hiring Tool Discriminated Against Women	2018	ACLU	Legal Commentary	Framed the issue as a civil rights and employment discrimination case; linked algorithmic bias to Title VII liability.	https://www.aclu.org/news/womens-rights/why-amazons-automated-hiring-tool-discriminated-against
Amazon's AI hiring bias: academic review by Carnegie Mellon	2018	Carnegie Mellon University mazon's AI hiring bias: academic review by Carnegie Mellon	Academic News	Offered an academic synthesis of the Reuters findings; discussed gender-coded keywords and challenges of algorithmic auditing.	https://www.heinz.cmu.edu/~acquisti/papers/Acquisti_Experiment_Hiring_Discrimination_Social_Networks.pdf

Amazon's sexist recruiting algorithm reflects a larger gender bias	2018	Mashable	Commentary	Expanded discussion to systemic workplace sexism and automation ethics; critical social framing of algorithmic injustice.	https://mashable.com/article/amazon-sexist-recruiting-algorithm-gender-bias-ai
Amazon Accused of Race-gender Bias in Workplace	2021	Economic Times HR	News	Extended the AI bias debate to racial discrimination, connecting algorithmic bias with workplace diversity accountability.	https://hr.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/workplace-4-0/diversity-and-inclusion/amazon-accused-of-race-gender-bias-in-workplace/81286106
Amazon DEI Transparency Initiative Report	2021	Amazon	Corporate Report	Post-crisis DEI statement signaling organizational learning; emphasizes inclusion and algorithmic fairness.	https://www.aboutamazon.co.uk/news/working-at-amazon/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-at-amazon
Amazon releases employee diversity data for first time in years	2021	Washington Business Journal	Business News	Institutional transparency measure; documents public release of workforce diversity data.	https://www.bizjournals.com/washington/news/2021/04/15/amazon-diversity-data.html
A Bias for Action: Amazon Founder Jeff Bezos on How to Stop Overthinking	2021	Herbert Lui / Interview Genie	Commentary	Contextualizes "Bias for Action" as a core leadership principle shaping Amazon's culture of decision-making under uncertainty.	https://herbertlui.net/a-bias-for-action-amazon-founder-jeff-bezos-on-how-to-stop-overthinking/
Algorithmic Accountability: Moving Beyond Audits	2023	AI Now Institute	Research Report	Critically examines audit-based accountability and argues for structural responsibility beyond technical bias, referencing Amazon's role in shaping AI auditing practices.	https://ainowinstitute.org/publications/algorithmic-accountability
Putting Responsible AI into Practice: Best Practices and Guidelines	2023	IDC / Amazon Web Services (AWS)	Corporate Whitepaper / Sponsored Research	Presents AWS's Responsible AI principles focused on fairness, transparency, and accountability.	https://pages.awscloud.com/rs/112-TZM-766/images/IDC-Infobrief-Putting-Responsible-AI-Into-Practice-eBook.pdf?trk=c4a72178-acef-4233-8fb0-f6566487b5f6&sc_channel=psm
When AI Plays Favourites: How Algorithmic Bias Shapes the Hiring Process	2024	The Conversation (University of Calgary)	Academic Commentary / Analytical Article	Explores ethical and data bias issues in AI-based hiring, using Amazon's case as an example.	https://theconversation.com/when-ai-plays-favourites-how-algorithmic-bias-shapes-the-hiring-process-239471
Amazon Stakeholder Letter	2024	Amazon	Investor Letter	The document addresses stakeholder expectations and concerns related to corporate reputation.	https://s2.q4cdn.com/299287126/files/doc_financials/2024/ar/Amazon-com-Inc-2023-Shareholder-Letter.pdf
External Ethics Review Report	2024	Independent Review Board	Independent Report	The document examines external ethical audit and corporate governance processes.	https://assets.aboutamazon.com/ed/8e/1c328d464449a04defbf8b0987d3/83024-final-amazon-external-report.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com
Proxy Statement (Schedule 14A) for the Annual Meeting of Shareholders	2024	U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)	Regulatory / SEC Filing	Highlights regulatory transparency and governance accountability in the post-crisis context.	https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1018724/000110465924045910/tm2329302d4_def14a.htm

Note: All documents were retrieved from publicly accessible and verified sources.

to each variable in MAXQDA, and the frequency levels of the main themes and sub-themes were determined accordingly. The discourses (memos) in the coding system were illustrated with examples through concept maps. In addition, a word cloud generated from the most salient concepts across the documents contributed to the visualization of the strategies adopted by Amazon in managing the algorithmic bias crisis in its AI-based recruitment system.

Table 2 presents the main themes, sub-themes, and representative discourse examples derived from the thematic analysis of Amazon's corporate communication regarding its AI-driven hiring crisis. The table summarizes the multilayered nature of the company's communication strategies and illustrates how each theme is reflected within the organizational discourse. This thematic framework demonstrates that the language used by Amazon throughout the crisis followed a dual strategy encompassing both technical intervention and reputation management dimensions.

Table 2

Themes, Sub-Themes, and Representative Discourses Derived from the Thematic Analysis of Amazon's AI-Driven Hiring Crisis

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Definition	Example Statements
Corporate Transparency and Accountability	Post-Crisis Communication Strategies	Examines how the organization informs the public and stakeholders after a crisis, including its approach to disclosure, timing of responses, and possible avoidance of transparency.	1. "This was never used by Amazon recruiters to evaluate candidates." 2. "Amazon added that it was already working with organizations such as Code.org, the Anita Borg Institute and Girls Who Code..." 3. "Amazon has not responded to the claims."
	Evasion of Responsibility and Accountability	Refers to strategies where the organization avoids assuming direct responsibility for the crisis, shifting blame to individuals or abstract entities, and distancing itself from accountability.	1. "...the project was abandoned for a number of different reasons, not just the gender bias issue..." 2. "The company says it has zero tolerance for discrimination and takes all complaints seriously." 3. "We are committed to fairly and equitably compensating all our employees..."
	Opacity in Data and Decision-Making Processes	Addresses the lack of clarity about what data decisions are based on, how systems operate, and how outcomes are monitored—particularly in algorithmic contexts.	1. "We publish our workforce demographic data annually and share our goals and progress." 2. "[Regarding Rekognition] It is not possible to draw a conclusion on the accuracy of facial recognition for any given sex, ethnicity or age." 3. "We continue to work hard to be transparent about our goals and our progress."
Reputation Management Strategies (SCCT)	Denial and Diminishment Tactics	Defensive strategies in which the organization rejects its connection to the crisis (denial) or minimizes its seriousness (diminishment) to reduce responsibility. Emphasizing that the system was only "experimental" reflects this tactic.	1. "The tool 'was never used by Amazon recruiters to evaluate candidates.'" 2. "...the program had only ever been used in trials..." 3. "Amazon claimed the study was flawed because it relied on facial analysis, not facial recognition."
	Limited Corrective Actions	Describes situations where the organization claims to have taken action to fix the problem, yet those measures are partial, technical, or insufficient to address the root causes.	1. "Amazon's research team states that they modified the central algorithms... however, that was not a guarantee..." 2. "...it was tweaked to remove this bias. However, those involved could not be sure other biases had not crept in..." 3. "A new team in Edinburgh has been formed to give automated employment screening another try, this time with a focus on diversity."
	Lack of Bolstering (Strategic Gap)	Refers to the absence of a bolstering strategy, where the organization fails to invoke its past good works, CSR efforts, or positive identity to reinforce reputation during a crisis.	No direct quotation was identified for this theme, as it reflects the absence of a bolstering strategy during the crisis.
Ethical Responsibility and Algorithmic Discrimination	The Link Between Algorithmic Bias and Corporate History	Highlights that bias in AI systems stems not from isolated technical errors, but from the institution's long-standing, male-dominated datasets, cultural norms, and historical hiring practices.	1. "Amazon's machine-learning specialists uncovered a big problem: their new recruiting engine did not like women." 2. "The models were trained on resumes submitted to the company over 10 years... Most came from men." 3. "The system penalized resumes that included the word 'women's,' such as 'women's chess club captain."
	Discourse vs. Practice in Ethical Responsibility	Refers to the contradiction between the company's public commitment to fairness, equality, and ethics, and its actual behaviors, such as minimizing problems or continuing ethically questionable practices.	1. "We are committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and we work to foster a culture where every employee is valued, respected, and has the opportunity to thrive." 2. "The company says it has zero tolerance for discrimination and takes all complaints seriously." 3. "Amazon has denied these allegations and said it is committed to a diverse and inclusive workplace."
Leadership and Corporate Culture	Action-Oriented Culture in Crisis	Refers to the organization's ability to make quick, initiative-driven decisions under uncertainty and pressure, grounded in its established cultural value of "taking action rather than waiting."	1. "Speed matters in business. Many decisions and actions are reversible and do not need extensive study." 2. "Whenever there's doubt about whether to act or wait, I always err on the side of taking action." 3. "One of the only ways to get out of a tight box is to invent your way out."

Corporate Intervention and Crisis Management	Systemic Intervention and Withdrawal	Refers to technical or operational actions aimed at eliminating the source of the crisis, such as modifying, suspending, or permanently discontinuing the biased algorithmic system.	1. "The project was abandoned..." 2. "...the company scrapped the project after seeing it had developed a preference for male candidates..." 3. "The Seattle company ultimately disbanded the team... because executives lost hope for the project."
	Superficial PR Strategies and Performative Repair	Describes PR-oriented responses focused on managing public perception rather than addressing structural issues, such as vague commitments, collaborations, or broad declarations of inclusivity.	1. "Amazon said it was working with organizations such as Code.org, the Anita Borg Institute and Girls Who Code..." 2. "We are committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and we work to foster a culture where every employee is valued, respected, and has the opportunity to thrive." 3. "The company says it has zero tolerance for discrimination and takes all complaints seriously."
Stakeholder Pressure and Corporate Resistance	Forced Transparency Through External Pressure	Refers to situations where the organization's transparency and accountability measures are driven not by internal ethical motivation but by external pressures from investors, regulators, or legal requirements.	1. "Amazon... sought permission from the SEC to omit the proposal [about gender pay equity reporting] from its annual ballot." 2. "The SEC said it did not agree with Amazon that the proposal was 'so inherently vague or indefinite' that it would impede implementation." 3. "This week, Amazon released workforce demographic data after mounting pressure from employees and shareholders."

As shown in Figure 1, Amazon's interventions during the crisis were grouped under the main theme of Corporate Intervention and Crisis Management, reflecting two fundamental approaches: technical action and image management.

The most frequent sub-theme, Superficial PR Strategies and Performative Repair (f = 18), shows that Amazon prioritized protecting its corporate image over addressing the structural causes of the problem. Statements such as "We remain committed to fairness and diversity" and "We are committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion" reflect an effort to soften public perceptions of responsibility rather than engage with the root causes of algorithmic bias.

A closely recurring sub-theme, Systemic Intervention and Withdrawal (f = 17), includes concrete operational steps such as discontinuing the biased AI system and disbanding the project team. The statement "The recruitment tool was discontinued as soon as bias was detected" exemplifies this strategy. Actions such as terminating the project, disbanding the responsible team, and completely decommissioning the system demonstrate that Amazon made a decisive technical move to contain the damage.

The findings indicate that Amazon deliberately pursued a dual strategy combining technical intervention with perception management. This approach reflects the company's long-standing "bias for action" principle: while encouraging quick decisions, it often led to communication practices lacking transparency and accountability. Thus, the system's swift termination represents Amazon's action-oriented reflex, whereas its "commitment"-based discourse illustrates an image-control tradition rather than a culture of open accountability.

As shown in Figure 2, the theme of *Ethical Responsibility & Algorithmic Discrimination* lies at the core of Amazon's ethical dilemmas. It includes two key sub-themes that reveal how the company confronted—or failed to confront—the social consequences of its technological innovations.

The most dominant sub-theme, *The Link Between Algorithmic Bias and Corporate History* (f = 20), shows that the bias in Amazon's AI system was not a technical glitch but a reflection of its long-standing male-dominated hiring culture. Statements such as *"The system was unintentionally trained to choose male candidates over female candidates"* and *"Amazon's automated system downgraded résumés containing the word 'women's' or names of all-women colleges"* illustrate how discrimination became embedded in corporate practices. This finding indicates that the crisis was not merely technological but rooted in corporate

Figure 1

Distribution of Main Themes: Corporate Intervention and Crisis Management

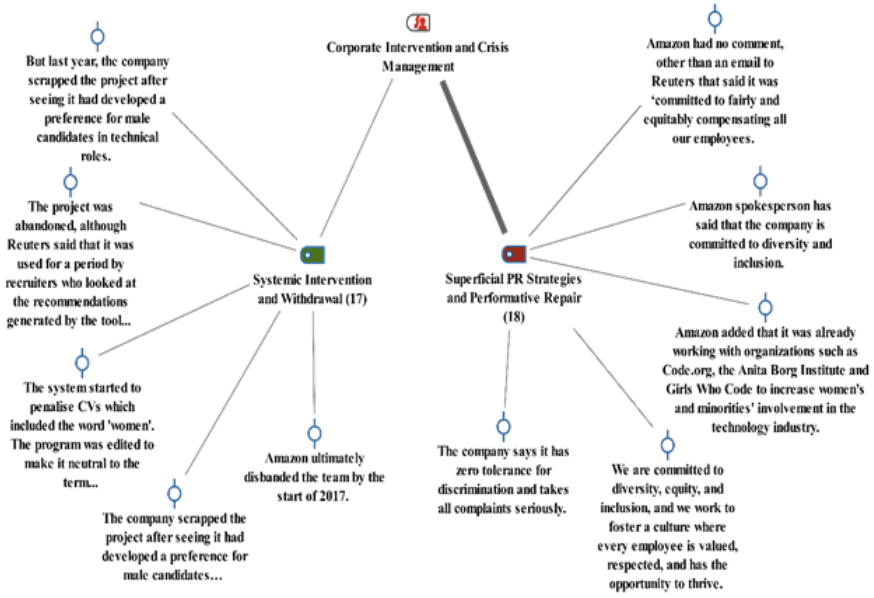
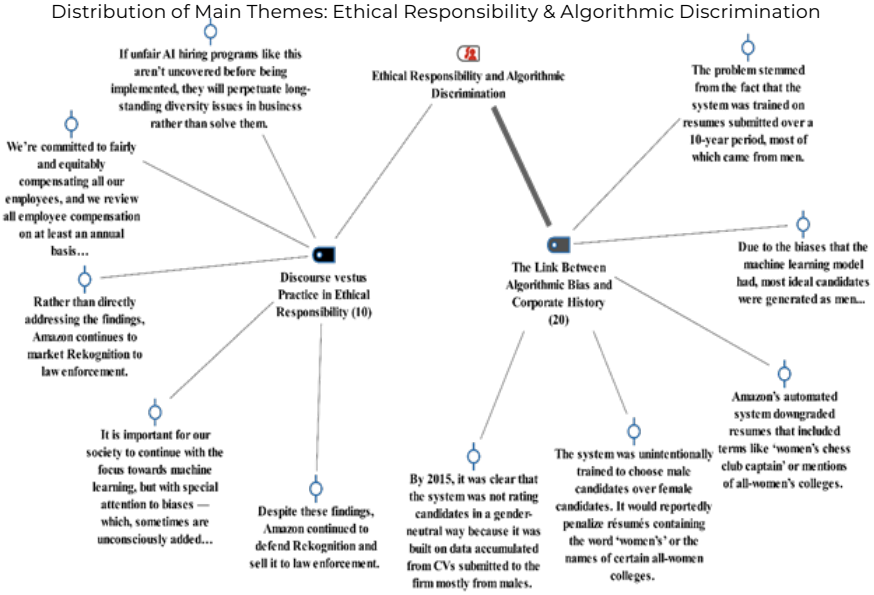


Figure 2

Distribution of Main Themes: Ethical Responsibility & Algorithmic Discrimination



culture.

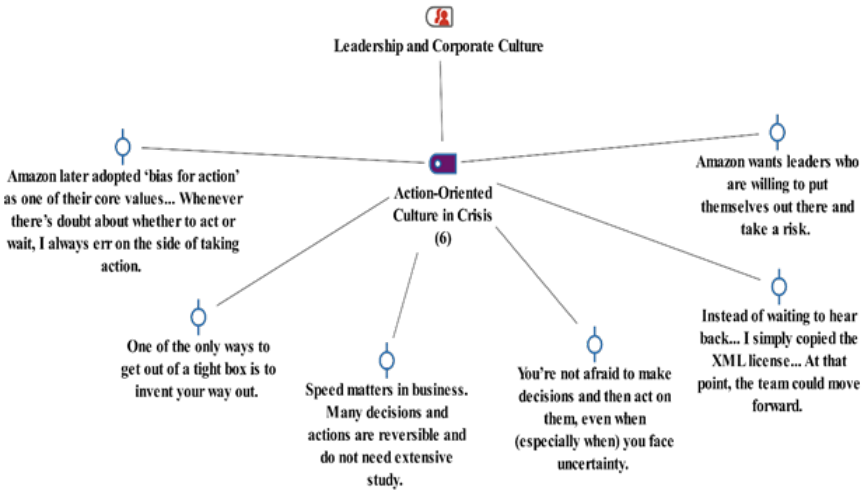
The second significant sub-theme was identified as Discourse vs. Practice in Ethical Responsibility (f = 10). The notable frequency of this sub-theme reveals a deep gap between Amazon's ethical discourse presented to the public and its actual practices. While the company made ethical commitments such as *"We're committed to fairly and equitably compensating all our employees,"* it continued to market controversial systems such as *Rekognition* instead of directly addressing the findings. This demonstrates that Amazon used the discourse of ethical responsibility as a tool for corporate reputation management while adopting an inconsistent stance in practice.

These findings also indicate that Amazon's corporate principles of "customer obsession" and "data-driven decision making" pushed ethical considerations to the background. The company's performance-oriented culture emphasized control and efficiency over accountability, turning ethical sensitivity into a strategic instrument.

In the analyzed documents, Leadership &

Figure 3

Distribution of Main Themes: Leadership & Corporate Culture



Corporate Culture emerged as a key dynamic shaping Amazon's crisis responses. This theme reveals how the company's deeply embedded cultural codes and long-standing organizational values influenced its decisions and behavior during the crisis.

All statements under this theme clustered around a single sub-theme, Action-Oriented Culture in Crisis (f = 6). These discourses emphasize Amazon's reflex for swift decision-making and immediate action, even under uncertainty. Phrases such as "Whenever there's doubt about whether to act or wait, I always err on the side of taking action" and "Speed matters in business; many decisions and actions are reversible" illustrate how the company's "bias for action" principle guided its approach to the crisis.

The rapid shutdown of the AI system reflected this principle. Within the SCCT framework, however, this action-oriented approach had dual effects: while quick intervention limited technical damage (diminish strategy), it delayed long-term transparency and accountability, creating perceptions of superficiality among stakeholders.

These findings suggest that Amazon's "bias for action" shaped its crisis communication by emphasizing speed over sustainability. While this reflex enabled effective short-term responses, it hindered deeper trust-building and reflection.

As illustrated in Figure 3, this culture acted both as a strategic strength and a communicative constraint, visualizing how leadership values translated into Amazon's crisis behavior.

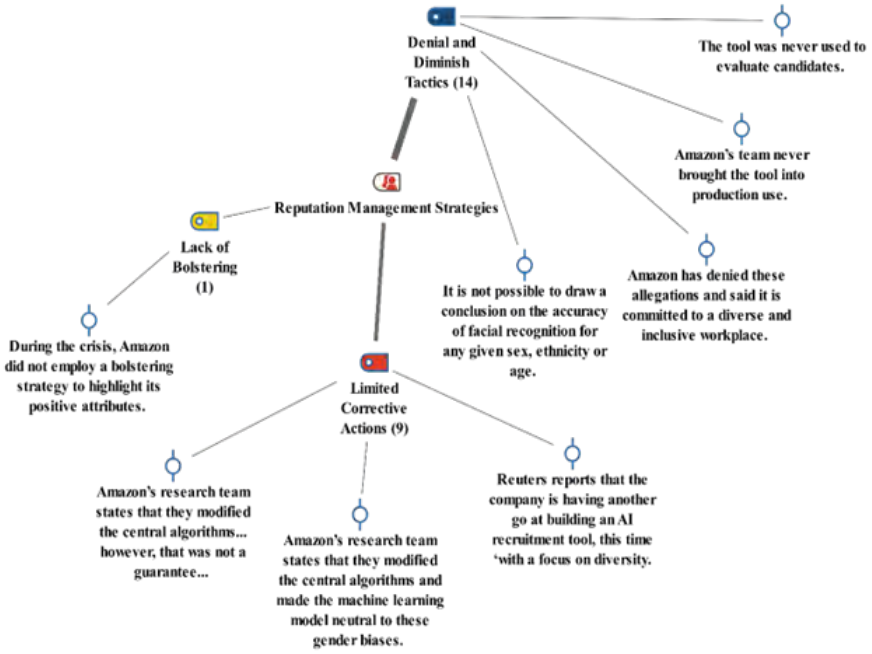
Amazon's crisis communication was analyzed under the main theme of Reputation Management Strategies, revealing a predominantly defensive and reactive stance rather than a proactive repair strategy. Three sub-themes emerged, illustrating how the company prioritized short-term image protection over long-term trust building.

The most dominant strategy, Denial and Diminishment Tactics (f = 14), shows that Amazon's primary response involved rejecting responsibility and minimizing the severity of the crisis. Statements such as "The tool *was never used to evaluate candidates"* and *"Amazon has denied these allegations and said it is committed to a diverse and inclusive workplace"* reflect efforts to distance the company from accountability. Within the SCCT framework, these examples illustrate a systematic use of the "diminish" strategy aimed at reducing ethical and legal liability.

The second sub-theme, Limited Corrective Actions (f = 9), represents partial technical interventions without deeper acknowledgment of organizational responsibility. For instance, "Amazon's research team stated that *they modified the central algorithms to make the model neutral to gender biases"* exemplifies this approach. However, these

Figure 4

Distribution of Main Themes: Reputation Management Strategies



corrective actions remained largely technical, showing a defensive tone rather than genuine problem resolution.

Finally, the sub-theme Lack of Bolstering (Strategic Gap) (f = 1) highlights the absence of efforts to build trust by referring to past achievements or corporate values. This gap reflects Amazon's failure to utilize SCCT's "bolstering"strategy. The findings suggest that Amazon deliberately avoided this strategy, likely due to concerns about appearing insincere or because of weak reputational capital.

From an SCCT perspective, Amazon mainly relied on "deny–diminish" strategies, while "rebuild" and "bolstering" remained weak. This reflects a control-oriented culture prioritizing risk avoidance over transparency. Figure 4 highlights the dominance of defensive responses and the lack of proactive reputation management.

In Amazon's crisis management process, the theme of Stakeholder Pressure and Corporate Resistance emerged as a key dynamic. Analysis revealed a dominant sub-theme, Forced Transparency Through External Pressure (f = 8), showing that Amazon's engagement with stakeholders stemmed not from voluntary accountability but from coercive external forces.

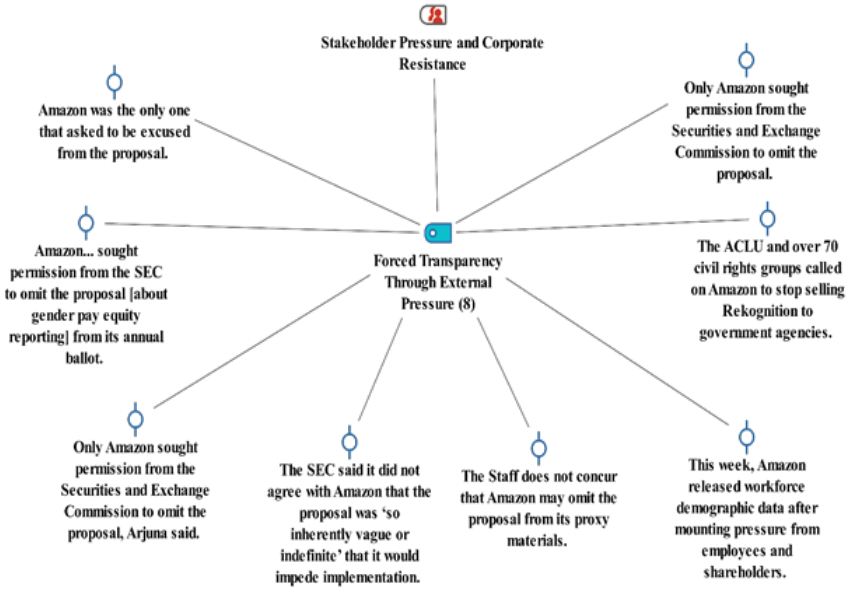
Statements such as "Only Amazon sought permission from the SEC to omit the proposal" and "The SEC said it did not agree with Amazon that the proposal was 'so inherently vague or indefinite' that it would impede implementation" clearly reflect resistance to transparency. Similarly, expressions like "The ACLU and over 70 civil rights groups called on Amazon to stop selling Rekognition to government agencies" show that openness was achieved only under external demands. These discourses reveal that transparency was not a proactive communication strategy but an unavoidable reaction to shareholder, activist, and regulatory pressure. The clustering of all statements under the "forced transparency" sub-theme indicates that the company shared information only when compelled by persistent external demands.

The findings also show that Amazon's control-oriented culture extended to its stakeholder relations, where "avoidance" and "diminishment" strategies replaced voluntary accountability. Within the SCCT framework, the company was forced to take limited "rebuilding" steps under mounting stakeholder pressure.

As illustrated in Figure 5, Amazon adopted transparency not as a strategic value but as

Figure 5

Distribution of Main Themes: Stakeholder Pressure & Corporate Resistance



a necessary concession during the crisis. The figure visualizes the tension between external pressure and internal resistance, emphasizing that transparency in Amazon's crisis communication was externally induced rather than internally cultivated.

Analysis of Amazon's crisis communication reveals that Corporate Transparency and Accountability was the company's most vulnerable dimension, with three sub-themes showing a systematic departure from transparency principles.

The most dominant sub-theme, Opacity in Data and Decision-Making Processes (f = 15), shows that Amazon's avoidance of accountability was rooted in information withholding. Statements such as "Amazon does not provide transparency into the datasets used to train Rekognition" and "Amazon has not disclosed the diversity of data used to train Rekognition" demonstrate a deliberate opacity extending beyond technical confidentiality to a communication culture that evades accountability. By concealing details on data sources, training mechanisms, and oversight, Amazon effectively created a "black box."

The second sub-theme, Post-Crisis Communication Strategies (f = 10), represents the external manifestation of this opacity. Recurrent statements such as "Amazon didn't respond to a request for comment about the recruiting tool" indicate that the company transformed silence and non-response into a deliberate crisis strategy—contrary to the rebuilding strategies proposed by SCCT.

Finally, Evasion of Responsibility and Accountability (f = 7) highlights the company's tendency to shift blame toward technical or managerial failures, as seen in "The company's experimental hiring tool was abandoned after executives lost hope for the project." This indicates that Amazon favored implicit avoidance—through concealment and silence—over direct denial.

Taken together, these findings suggest that transparency was not prioritized as a core corporate value. Instead, Amazon's secrecy-driven culture appears to have emphasized control mechanisms over openness, which may have limited the adoption of rebuilding strategies. As shown in Figure 6, this multi-layered structure visualizes Amazon's reflex to maintain control rather than transparency in the post-crisis period.

As shown in Figure 7, the presented word cloud visualizes the frequency-based prominent concepts within Amazon's discourse concerning its AI-driven hiring crisis. The terms positioned at the center of the map—"Amazon," "women," "bias," "gender," "candidates," and "resumes"—

Figure 6

Distribution of Main Themes: Corporate Transparency & Accountability

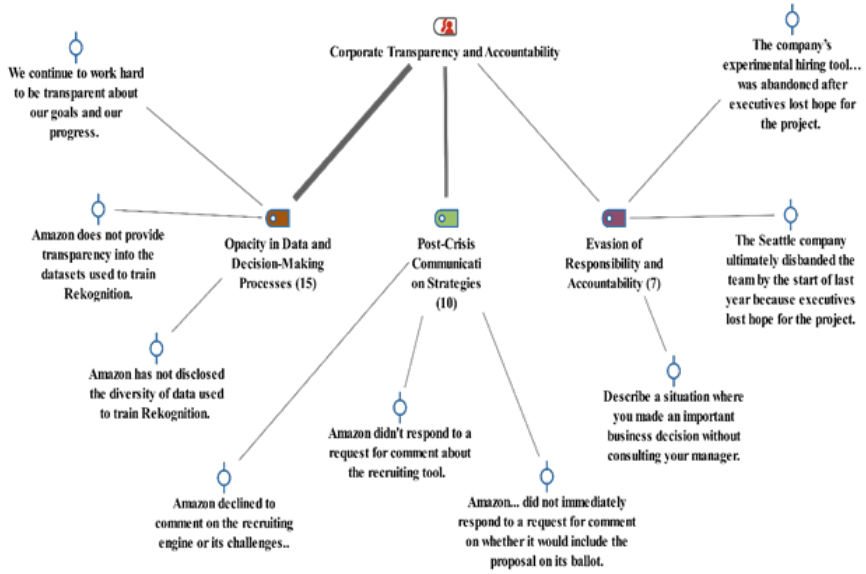


Figure 7

Word Cloud of Amazon's AI Crisis

clearly reflect the gender-based bias embedded in the system, which lies at the core of the crisis. These concepts demonstrate that algorithmic bias constituted the fundamental issue and triggered broader discussions about ethical responsibility. In contrast, the high frequency of words such as "not," "never," and "comment" reveals that Amazon adopted a defensive tone in its crisis discourse, aiming to minimize responsibility by avoiding explicit commentary. Meanwhile, positive terms like "committed," "diversity," "inclusion," and "equity" indicate that Amazon sought to construct a counter-discourse focused on reputation repair by emphasizing diversity and inclusivity during the crisis. However, the contextual use of these terms suggests that such discourse primarily served as a symbolic compliance mechanism—reflecting superficial public relations efforts rather than substantive organizational reform.

Moreover, the prominence of technical terms like "system," "tool," "software," and "data" reveals an attempt to marginalize the ethical and cultural dimensions of the crisis by reframing it as a purely technical issue. This finding supports the company's prevailing tendency toward technical rationality and control orientation within

its corporate culture. Taken together, these observations suggest that the word cloud visually demonstrates how Amazon's crisis communication blends three tendencies: evading responsibility, projecting a positive image, and taking refuge behind technical language. When evaluated within the SCCT framework, this figure shows that the company simultaneously employed diminishment and avoidance strategies, prioritizing control over transparency throughout its communication process.

Discussions

This study analyzes Amazon's corporate communication strategies during its AI-driven hiring crisis, showing that algorithmic bias is not merely a technical flaw but a hybrid crisis intertwining ethical, cultural, and organizational dynamics. The findings reveal that while Amazon partially employed strategies outlined by SCCT, the framework alone lacks sufficient explanatory power for the multidimensional nature of AI-based crises. SCCT categorizes crises as "victim," "accidental," or "preventable" (Coombs, 2007), yet the Amazon case fits only partly within these clusters: unforeseen software errors reflected an "accidental" crisis, whereas biased datasets and weak oversight placed it within the "preventable crisis" category. This dual character required simultaneous use of diminish and rebuild strategies, underscoring the need to move beyond SCCT's traditional typology.

An analysis of Amazon's discourse demonstrates that the company predominantly adopted a defensive tone during the crisis. Statements such as "The system was never officially used" or "It was only a trial tool" exemplify typical "diminish" strategies aimed at reducing responsibility and downplaying the severity of the incident. Conversely, expressions like "We remain committed to fairness and diversity" represent a superficial rebuilding attempt emphasizing ethical responsibility to reinforce corporate image. This dual approach directly answers the first research question regarding Amazon's communication tone and style during the AI-related gender bias crisis, demonstrating how the company's discourse aligned with SCCT's diminish and rebuild strategies. The findings indicate that the company pursued a two-fold strategy focused on both technical correction and softening public perception. However, its defensive discourse weakened perceptions of sincerity among stakeholders and pushed the ethical dimensions of the crisis into the background.

The interaction between ethical responsibility and corporate culture provides insight into the second research question, which explores how these elements were reflected in Amazon's communication strategies. The results indicate that Amazon's action-oriented culture—known internally as "bias for action"—created both strengths and vulnerabilities in crisis management. While the company's reflex for rapid decision-making enabled swift technical responses such as system deactivation, this same pace hindered transparent discussion of root causes and the establishment of accountability mechanisms. This finding underscores the need to approach ethical responsibility not solely as a post-crisis repair mechanism but as a guiding managerial principle institutionalized within corporate culture. Thus, the study extends SCCT beyond its traditional crisis-type-based orientation by highlighting the critical role of corporate culture in shaping crisis communication.

The third research question focuses on how values such as transparency, ethical responsibility, and accountability were addressed during the crisis. The findings reveal that Amazon adopted these values not as internalized principles but as strategic responses to external pressures. The company's public statements were primarily issued in reaction to demands from shareholders, civil society organizations, and regulatory bodies such as the SEC. This reflects what Raji et al. (2020) describe as "forced transparency," wherein transparency is implemented as a concession rather than a voluntary commitment. Amazon's reliance on externally induced transparency underscores the influence of stakeholder pressure—an external

variable not directly accounted for in SCCT—on the direction and tone of crisis communication.

Taken together, these findings offer a comprehensive response to the fourth research question on the adequacy of SCCT in explaining AI-driven crises. The Amazon case shows that a purely technical "diminish" strategy is insufficient; ethical responsibility, corporate culture, and stakeholder pressure must also be integrated. Accordingly, the proposed "Multidimensional Algorithmic Crisis Communication Framework" extends SCCT in three dimensions: (1) adding ethical responsibility as a new classification element, (2) positioning corporate culture as an internal variable, and (3) integrating stakeholder pressure as an external one. This holistic model transforms SCCT into a proactive framework for ethical governance and responsible AI communication grounded in accountability, transparency, and trust.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study examined Amazon's communication strategies during the AI-driven hiring crisis within the SCCT framework. The findings show that the company treated the crisis not merely as a technical issue but as one shaped by corporate culture, ethics, and stakeholder pressure. While Amazon ended the flawed recruitment tool, its PR-focused messaging prioritized short-term image repair over long-term trust building.

A key finding is that the bias originated not from a temporary software flaw but from structural issues rooted in Amazon's hiring culture and data. This shows that AI-driven crises must be analyzed through ethical and cultural lenses, not just technical ones.

The study shows that Amazon applied transparency and accountability reactively, under external pressure rather than as genuine ethical values. This reliance on strategic transparency widened the gap between the company's ethical discourse and its actions.

These results indicate that the existing form of SCCT remains limited in explaining AI-driven crises, as it primarily focuses on post-event responses. The proposed "Multidimensional Algorithmic Crisis Communication Framework" expands SCCT by incorporating ethical responsibility into crisis classification, positioning corporate culture as an internal variable, and considering stakeholder pressure as an external factor. This framework differs from the classic SCCT approach by integrating ethical responsibility, stakeholder engagement, and transparency as continuous elements rather than reactive strategies. In doing so, it moves beyond model-based categorization and offers a flexible conceptual structure for AI-driven crises. Ultimately, this integrated approach reframes crisis communication as a management philosophy grounded in ethical governance, accountability, and trust building.

The findings offer practical implications for organizations. Transparency and accountability should be embedded in corporate governance, with independent audits regularly published to sustain public trust. Crisis communication must move beyond superficial PR and prioritize sincere, corrective messages that rebuild stakeholder confidence. Ethical values such as diversity, equity, and inclusion should be transparently implemented and tracked through measurable indicators. Developing internal monitoring systems and early-warning mechanisms to detect algorithmic bias, alongside stronger academia–industry collaboration, is essential for effective prevention and trust-building.

This research focuses solely on Amazon's algorithmic bias case; therefore, the findings have limited generalizability. The analysis relied on publicly available documents and covered sources between May and July 2025. Future studies could refine the proposed framework through cross-sector comparisons and experimental research on stakeholder perceptions to deepen understanding of AI-driven crisis communication.

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Note: Generative AI tools (DeepL and ChatGPT 4o) assisted only minimally in the translation stage. All scholarly content, analysis, and conclusions were developed independently by the author.

Genişletilmiş Özet

Yapay zekâ (YZ) tabanlı teknolojiler, son on yılda kurumsal karar alma süreçlerinde giderek yaygınlaşmış, özellikle işe alım, müşteri ilişkileri ve risk yönetimi gibi alanlarda insan faktörünü azaltarak verimliliği artırmayı vaat etmiştir. Ancak bu teknolojilerin şeffaf olmayan doğası ve geçmiş verilerdeki toplumsal önyargıları yeniden üretme riski, kurumların etik güvenilirliği ve itibarı açısından yeni kriz türlerini gündeme getirmiştir. Özellikle işe alım ve değerlendirme süreçlerinde ortaya çıkan algoritmik ayrımcılık vakaları, yalnızca bireylerin haklarını değil, aynı zamanda kurumların toplumsal meşruiyetini de tehdit etmektedir.

Bu bağlamda, 2018 yılında Reuters ve The Guardian gibi medya kuruluşlarının haberlerine konu olan Amazon vakası, yapay zekâ temelli işe alım sistemlerinin etik sınırlarını tartışmaya açan önemli bir örnektir. Şirketin işe alım sürecinde kullandığı yapay zekâ destekli yazılım, geçmiş verilerden öğrenerek kadın adayların özgeçmişlerini sistematik biçimde dezavantajlı puanlamış, hatta "women" kelimesi geçen ifadeleri olumsuz değerlendirmiştir. Olayın ortaya çıkması üzerine Amazon algoritmayı devre dışı bırakmış, ancak bu süreç "teknolojik ayrımcılık" tartışmalarını alevlendirmiş ve şirketin şeffaflık ile hesap verebilirlik politikaları ciddi biçimde sorgulanmıştır.

Bu çalışma, söz konusu krizi kurumsal iletişim perspektifinden ele almakta ve Amazon'un kriz sürecinde uyguladığı söylem stratejilerini Durumsal Kriz İletişimi Kuramı (SCCT) çerçevesinde incelemektedir. SCCT, kriz türlerine göre sorumluluk düzeyini belirleyen ve buna uygun iletişim stratejileri öneren bir kuramsal çerçevedir. Ancak yapay zekâ kaynaklı krizler, hem öngörülemeyen yazılım hataları nedeniyle "kaza krizi", hem de veri setlerindeki sistematik önyargılar ve denetim eksiklikleri nedeniyle "önlenebilir kriz" özellikleri taşıdığından, klasik SCCT kategorilerine tam olarak sığmamaktadır. Bu durum, krizlerin yalnızca teknik değil, aynı zamanda etik ve kültürel boyutlarıyla da değerlendirilmesi gerektiğini göstermektedir.

Bu çalışma, dört temel araştırma sorusuna yanıt aramaktadır. Birincisi, Amazon'un yapay zekâ temelli cinsiyet önyargısı krizine ilişkin kamuya yaptığı açıklamalarda nasıl bir iletişim stratejisi, söylem dili ve iletişim tonu benimsediğini sorgulamaktadır. İkincisi, şirketin kriz sürecinde kurumsal itibarını korumak amacıyla geliştirdiği kriz iletişimi stratejilerini incelemektedir. Üçüncüsü, algoritmik önyargı, şeffaflık, etik sorumluluk ve çözüm odaklılık gibi kavramların Amazon'un kamuya açık söylemlerinde nasıl ele alındığını analiz etmektedir. Dördüncü olarak ise, Amazon vakasından hareketle yapay zekâ kaynaklı krizlerde kurumsal itibar yönetimi ve kriz

iletişimi açısından hangi kuramsal çıkarımların yapılabileceğini değerlendirmektedir.

Araştırma, nitel bir vaka analizi olarak tasarlanmış ve belge analizi yöntemiyle yürütülmüştür. Veri seti, 2018–2024 yılları arasında yayımlanan 17 kamuya açık belgeden oluşmaktadır. Belgeler iki grupta sınıflandırılmıştır: Amazon'un kurumsal kaynakları (SEC raporları, resmi blog yazıları, DEI belgeleri) ve bağımsız medya içerikleri (Reuters, BBC, MIT Technology Review vb.). Veriler, MAXQDA yazılımı aracılığıyla tematik söylem analizi yöntemiyle değerlendirilmiş; SCCT temelinde ana temalar, alt temalar ve söylem örüntüleri belirlenmiştir.

Bulgular, Amazon'un kriz iletişiminin üç düzeyde şekillendiğini göstermektedir. Teknik düzeyde şirket, sistemi erken aşamada devre dışı bırakarak zararı sınırlamış, ancak bu müdahale sorunun kök nedenlerini ele almaktan ziyade semptomları bastırmaya yönelik olmuştur. Söylemsel düzeyde, "Sistem hiçbir zaman resmi olarak kullanılmadı" ("The system was never officially used") veya "Yalnızca deneme amaçlı bir araçtı" ("It was only a trial tool") gibi ifadeler, sorumluluğu azaltmaya ve krizi önemsizleştirmeye dönük klasik "azaltma" stratejilerini yansıtmaktadır.

İletişimsel düzeyde ise Amazon, şeffaflık ve hesap verebilirliği gönüllü kurumsal değerler olarak değil, dışsal baskılara tepki olarak uygulamıştır. Bu durum, literatürde "zorunlu şeffaflık" olarak tanımlanan olgunun tipik bir örneğini sunmaktadır.

Elde edilen sonuçlar, Amazon'un iletişim stratejisinin teknik rasyonaliteye dayalı, savunmacı ve kontrol odaklı bir yaklaşım sergilediğini ortaya koymuştur. Algoritmik önyargının geçici bir yazılım hatasından ziyade, şirketin tarihsel işe alım kültürüne ve veri setlerine gömülü yapısal bir soruna dayandığı belirlenmiştir. Bu durum, yapay zekâ tabanlı krizlerin yalnızca teknik çözümlerle yönetilemeyeceğini; kurumsal kültür, etik yönetişim ve paydaş baskısı gibi faktörlerin sürecin ayrılmaz parçaları olarak ele alınması gerektiğini göstermektedir.

Bu bulgular doğrultusunda çalışma, SCCT'nin sınırlarını genişleterek "Çok Boyutlu Algoritmik Kriz İletişimi Çerçevesi"ni (Multidimensional Algorithmic Crisis Communication Framework) önermektedir. Bu çerçeve, etik sorumluluğun kriz sınıflandırmalarına dâhil edilmesini, kurumsal kültürün içsel bir değişken, paydaş baskısının ise dışsal bir etken olarak değerlendirilmesini öngörmektedir. Ayrıca şeffaflık, hesap verebilirlik ve paydaş katılımının yalnızca kriz anlarında değil, kurumsal yönetimin sürekli unsurları olarak konumlandırılmasının gerekliliğini vurgulamaktadır. Böylelikle SCCT'nin olay sonrası tepkilere dayalı yapısından farklı olarak, kriz iletişimini etik yönetişim, güven inşası ve hesap verebilirliğe dayalı bütüncül bir süreç olarak yeniden tanımlamaktadır.

Çalışma, kurumlar açısından çeşitli uygulamaya dönük çıkarımlar da sunmaktadır. Şeffaflık ve hesap verebilirlik yalnızca kriz dönemlerinde değil, kurumsal yönetimin kalıcı bir parçası hâline getirilmelidir. Kriz iletişimi stratejileri yüzeysel halkla ilişkiler söylemleriyle sınırlı kalmamalı; açıklayıcı, telafi edici ve samimi mesajlarla paydaş güvenini yeniden inşa etmeye odaklanmalıdır. Çeşitlilik, eşitlik ve kapsayıcılık gibi etik değerler yalnızca politika belgelerinde yer almamalı; bu değerlerin uygulamadaki karşılığı şeffaf biçimde paylaşılmalı ve ölçülebilir göstergelerle izlenmelidir. Ayrıca, olası algoritmik önyargıların kriz hâline gelmeden önce tespit edilebilmesi için kurum içi denetim ve erken uyarı sistemleri geliştirilmelidir. Akademi ve endüstri arasındaki iş birliği güçlendirilerek, algoritmik önyargıların erken tespiti ve önlenmesine yönelik yenilikçi modeller geliştirilebilir.

Sonuç olarak bu çalışma, Amazon örneği üzerinden yapay zekâ temelli krizlerin yalnızca teknik veya iletişimsel bir sorun değil, aynı zamanda etik bir sınav olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. SCCT'nin bu tür hibrit krizleri açıklamada yeterli olabilmesi için çok katmanlı bir yapıya kavuşturulması gerektiği ileri sürülmektedir. Bu doğrultuda geliştirilen "Çok Boyutlu Algoritmik Kriz İletişimi Çerçevesi", kriz iletişimini tepki verme pratiği olmaktan çıkararak

etik yönetişim, hesap verebilirlik ve uzun vadeli güven inşasına dayalı bir yönetim anlayışı olarak yeniden tanımlamaktadır.

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