

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Organizational Crisis Management in the Age of Disinformation: Leadership, Communication, and Resilience, A Systematic Review

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Abstract

This systematic review frames organizational crisis management as both a strategic necessity and a societal responsibility amid overlapping crises and rapid information flows. Synthesizing 246 Scopus articles (2010–2025), it applies SPAR-4-SLR alongside PRISMA 2020 for transparency and rigor. Bibliometric mapping with VOSviewer and Excel shows a growing field bridging management, communication studies, and public administration. Four interconnected domains emerge: (1) crisis leadership emphasizing ethical authority, trust, and adaptive decision-making; (2) organizational communication balancing timeliness, transparency, and stakeholder engagement; (3) disinformation management using fact-checking, prebunking, and real-time monitoring; and (4) integrated response frameworks pairing operational action with symbolic communication to strengthen resilience. Thematic synthesis exposes gaps: underrepresentation of non-Western perspectives, limited work at the leadership–misinformation nexus, and scant attention to ethical and political consequences of governing disinformation. These blind spots inform a research agenda. The study advances an integrative framework positioning leadership, communication, and misinformation mitigation as a unified strategic capability. Theoretically, it argues for tighter integration between crisis communication and disinformation research; practically, it underscores ethical leadership, transparent dialogue, and monitoring as core practices for sustaining legitimacy in information-rich environments.

Keywords: Leadership, Resilience, Misinformation, Crisis Management, Crisis Communication

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Öz

Birbirine eklemlenen krizler ve hızlanan bilgi akışları bağlamında, bu sistematik derleme örgütsel kriz yönetimini hem stratejik bir gereklilik hem de toplumsal bir sorumluluk olarak çerçevelemektedir. Çalışma, 2010–2025 döneminde Scopus'ta dizinlenen 246 makaleyi sentezlemekte; şeffaflık ve yöntemli tizlik için SPAR-4-SLR protokolünü PRISMA 2020 yönergeleriyle birlikte uygulamaktadır. VOSviewer ve Excel ile yapılan bibliyometrik haritalama, yönetim, iletişim çalışmaları ve kamu yönetimini birbirine bağlayan hızla büyüyen bir alan ortaya koymaktadır. Literatürde dört karşılıklı bağlı eksen öne çıkmaktadır: (1) etik otorite, güven ve uyarlanabilir karar almayı vurgulayan kriz liderliği; (2) zamanlama, şeffaflık ve paydaş katılımını dengeleyen örgütsel iletişim; (3) doğrulama, önleyici bilgilendirme (prebunking) ve gerçek zamanlı izlemeye dayalı dezenformasyon yönetimi; ve (4) operasyonel eylemi simgesel iletişimle birleştirerek dayanıklılığı güçlendiren bütünsel yanıt çerçeveleri. Tematik sentez, Batı-dışı perspektiflerin yetersiz temsili, liderlik-yanlış bilgi kesişiminde sınırlı çalışma ve dezenformasyon yönetiminin etik ile politik sonuçlarına gösterilen düşük ilgiyi açığa çıkarmaktadır; bu kör noktalar geleceğe dönük araştırma gündemini bilgilendirmektedir. Çalışma, liderlik, iletişim ve yanlış bilgiyle mücadelenin birleşik bir stratejik yetkinlik olarak konumlandığı bütünsel bir çerçeve önermektedir. Kuramsal düzeyde kriz iletişimi ile dezenformasyon araştırmalarının daha sıkı entegrasyonunu savunmakta; uygulamada ise bilgiyle doymuş ortamlarda meşruiyetin sürdürülmesi için etik liderlik, şeffaf diyalog ve sürekli izlemeyi temel pratikler olarak vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Liderlik, Dayanıklılık, Yanlış Bilgilendirme, Kriz Yönetimi, Kriz İletişimi

Introduction

Crisis management in businesses has progressively evolved into a cross-disciplinary activity, integrating leadership, stakeholder communication, and the governance (or absence thereof) of information environments. A global pandemic, climate-related upheavals, political instability, and crises caused by the spread of false information online are all making things more complicated. Organizations need to come up with plans that take into account both the immediate needs of operations and the larger social effects, not just short-term containment. They become systemic, triggering cascading effects that heighten uncertainty and expose vulnerabilities. Increased complexity is further illustrated by what has been called an “infodemic”, where misleading or false information spreads rapidly across digital networks, eroding trust, hindering decision-making, and heightening reputational risk. Research on crisis leadership, organizational communication, and misinformation management has significantly expanded but is often disconnected. Leadership relates to authority and decision-making, communication to the design and timing of messages, and disinformation to detection, correction, and governance. Governance (or its absence) points to how effectively regulatory frameworks, platform policies, and institutional mechanisms manage the information environment, or fail to do so. Contested truths arise when factual claims are disputed across political, cultural, or ideological lines, creating polarized perceptions of reality. The concept of an infodemic describes the rapid spread of misleading or false information in digital spaces, which undermines trust, overwhelms stakeholders, and obstructs effective responses. Finally, resilient organizations are those that not only recover from crises but also adapt, learn, and strengthen their systems in the face of disruption. The gap between these domains does not allow integrated frameworks to emerge and also retards efforts toward practical guidelines that can be made for the actualities of contemporary crises. This review seeks to bridge these divides by synthesizing research at the intersection of leadership, communication, and misinformation mitigation.

This study situates organizational crisis management within broader socio-political and cultural contexts by systematically reviewing 246 peer-reviewed articles published between 2010 and 2025. Using the SPAR-4-SLR protocol alongside PRISMA 2020 guidelines, the analysis combines bibliometric mapping with thematic synthesis to capture both structural publication trends and conceptual linkages across leadership, communication, and disinformation governance. The findings advance theoretical understanding by integrating these fragmented domains into a resilience framework, while offering practical guidance on the need for ethical leadership, transparent dialogue, and real-time monitoring systems. Although limited by reliance on a single database and a cross-sectional design, the review identifies critical blind spots including Western dominance and insufficient attention to ethical and political dimensions and contributes new insights into pathways for building resilient organizations in volatile, information-saturated environments.

Theoretical Background

Organizational crisis management is based on several related theoretical foundations. Literature most frequently draws from three major domains: (1) models of crisis management, (2) leadership approaches to the management of crises, and (3) crisis communication and the governance of misinformation. Each has developed a considerable body of insight but in large measure, separately. An examination of 246 articles indexed by Scopus and published between 2010 and 2025 shows that, whereas individual frameworks are well established, integrated treatments that bring them together are relatively rare.

Crisis Management Models

Classical models provide systematic methodologies for diagnosis, reaction, and learning in crisis management. The Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) (Coombs, 2007) is the most generally used framework since it looks at how well the sort of crisis, who is to blame, and how to communicate with each other match up. Another

pertinent theoretical framework is Image Repair Theory (IRT) (Benoit, 1997), which primarily focuses on rhetorical methods for reputation recovery following a crisis. Resilience-based models (Duchek, 2020) have recently transitioned the emphasis from reactive to proactive capabilities, encompassing anticipation, adaptation, and organizational learning. Since 2020, there has been a growing trend toward terms like "resilience," "adaptive capacity," and "systems thinking." This shows that the field is moving toward a new way of thinking where flexibility and change are more important than damage control. The literature has also discussed complexity theory to explain how crisis circumstances might change in ways that aren't linear and need adaptive self-organizing answers.

Leadership in Crisis Contexts

Leadership studies have enhanced crisis management studies by integrating several theoretical frameworks. Transformational leadership (Seltzer & Bass, 1990) underscores vision and inspiration, whereas adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009) prioritizes negotiating ambiguity and facilitating group problem-solving. Servant leadership (Greenleaf, 2013), conversely, emphasizes empathy, stewardship, and community-building attributes that have gained significance during crises characterized by pronounced social and ethical components. Sensemaking (Weick & Weick, 1995) functions as a cohesive framework among various traditions. Leaders not only make choices, but they also make sense of unclear situations and give clear stories that help the company act. Bibliometric investigations confirm the robust interconnections among leadership, trust, resilience, and organizational learning. This confirms that evaluating leadership during crises should consider not only immediate operational outcomes but also the level of legitimacy and stakeholder confidence that the individual maintains.

Crisis Communication and Misinformation Governance

For a long time, research on crisis communication has said that communication needs to be clear, timely, and consistent to preserve people's trust (Coombs, 2015; Ulmer et al., 2022). But the world of digital misinformation changes quickly, which makes it hard. Since 2018, there have been more studies on the "infodemic" phenomenon, which is how quickly false stories spread over official information and influence how people see things. People are coming up with new ways to have two-way conversations. In these strategies, companies pay attention to what people are saying online and move in straight away to check facts, stop rumors, and pre-bunk false claims. The term "misinformation governance," which has become more common in literature since 2021, refers to coordinated policy efforts, digital tools, and collaborations across sectors to find and stop damaging information flows.

This coming together of crisis communication and misinformation management needs a mix of skills. People who work in public relations should know how to use digital tools, analyze data, and work together to make decisions. More evidence shows that controlling false information works better when it is part of bigger resilience framework. This is because it makes the links between leadership, communication, and crisis management models stronger.

Frameworks for Integrated Crisis Response

Recent scholarly research emphasizes that crisis management cannot be entirely understood through leadership, communication, or misinformation governance in isolation. Integrated response frameworks, on the other hand, make organizations stronger by combining operational actions (like planning for emergencies, assigning resources, and logistics) with symbolic communication (such as framing narratives, building trust, and making claims of legitimacy). This two-pronged approach recognizes that crises are both real and imagined. Technical measures keep things operating smoothly, but symbolic gestures

change how stakeholders see and respond to the problem. Integrated governance models link management strategies with social and cultural dynamics, facilitating adaptation and communal meaning-making.

Theoretical ideas from resilience theory (Duchek, 2020) and transformation theory emphasize that resilience is cultivated not only by restoring functionality but also by facilitating learning and adaptation through cross-functional collaboration, after-action reviews, and scenario-based training. Integrated frameworks offer a comprehensive approach for businesses to navigate disruptions, rebuild credibility, and establish enduring trust among stakeholders by aligning operational efficiency with communicative legitimacy.

This convergence of crisis communication and disinformation management requires hybrid skill sets, where communicators combine traditional expertise in public relations with digital literacy, data analytics, and collaborative governance. Evidence also indicates that disinformation control is more effective when embedded within broader resilience frameworks, since this integration strengthens the connections between leadership, communication, and crisis management models. While these concepts largely originate from Western scholarship, it is equally important to acknowledge and integrate insights from local and national studies. Although Scopus provided the main sample for this review, drawing on updated domestic literature would enrich the analysis, ensure contextual relevance, and prevent the marginalization of non-Western perspectives.

Methodology

Review Protocol and Rationale

To ensure rigor and transparency, the study used the SPAR-4-SLR protocol (Paul et al., 2021) integrated with PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021). SPAR-4-SLR offers a four-stage process planning, execution, analysis, and reporting that has been described as structured and has found wide acceptance in management and organizational research. The documentation of the screening and eligibility process is standardized by a

flow diagram under PRISMA, which thereby makes it complemented by enhanced reproducibility.

Data Source and Search Strategy

Scopus was chosen as the sole database because it provides comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals across management, social sciences, communication, and public administration. While relying on a single source offers consistency and transparency in data collection, it also entails certain limitations. Relevant studies indexed exclusively in Web of Science, Google Scholar, or discipline-specific databases may have been overlooked, which could restrict the scope of perspectives included in the review. Nonetheless, Scopus was prioritized due to its breadth of coverage, robust bibliometric functions, and widespread acceptance in management and organizational research. This search was conducted in August 2025 using the Boolean string ("crisis management" OR "crisis response") AND (organization OR leadership) AND (communication OR "crisis communication") AND (misinformation OR disinformation) across the title, abstract, and keywords. These terms were combined to ensure that the query captured the intersection of crisis management practices, leadership perspectives, communication strategies, and the governance of information disorders. The initial search was deliberately broad, and filters for language (English), document type (peer-reviewed journal articles), and subject area (Social Sciences; Business, Management & Accounting) were applied in subsequent stages of screening.

The initial query yielded 968 records. This broad strategy was intentionally designed to capture multiple disciplinary perspectives, including management, communication studies, and information systems.

Screening and Refinement

The multi-stage screening and refinement process applied in Scopus is summarized below:

Initial Search (n = 968). The query retrieved 968 records across all document types, languages, and

subject areas. This broad scope was intentionally designed to capture the full disciplinary range of crisis management research. Temporal Delimitation (2010–2025; $n = 378$). The timeframe was restricted to the period between 2010 and 2025. This window was selected to reflect the post–Global Financial Crisis environment, which marked the acceleration of digital transformation, the rise of social media as a dominant channel for crisis communication, and the increasing salience of misinformation as a governance challenge. Subject Area Restriction ($n = 275$). Records were then limited to the Social Sciences and the Business, Management & Accounting categories. This ensured thematic relevance by excluding literature focused solely on technical disaster modeling or engineering applications.

Document Type and Language ($n = 246$). Finally, only peer-reviewed journal articles published in English were retained. Conference proceedings, editorials, book chapters, and non-reviewed materials were excluded to preserve methodological rigor and comparability. The final dataset comprised 246 articles, which provided the empirical and conceptual foundation for the bibliometric mapping and thematic synthesis presented in this review (See Table 1). Thematic synthesis was carried out in NVivo through open and axial coding, enabling the identification of recurring concepts across leadership, communication, and disinformation governance. Coding was conducted by the author, and consistency was ensured through iterative refinement and cross-checking with bibliometric results, which enhanced the validity of the thematic categories.

Table 1. Refinement process

Stage	Description	Records (n)
1. Initial Search	All document types, languages, and subject areas retrieved from Scopus	968
2. Temporal Delimitation	Restricted to 2010–2025 (post–Global Financial Crisis; rise of social media and misinformation)	378
3. Subject Area Restriction	Limited to Social Sciences; Business, Management & Accounting	275
4. Document Type & Language	English-language, peer-reviewed journal articles only; excluded conference papers, book chapters, editorials, non-reviewed content	246
Final Dataset	Articles included in bibliometric mapping and thematic synthesis	246

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion:

- Explicit focus on crisis management or crisis response in organizational contexts.
- Direct engagement with at least one of the focal domains: leadership, communication strategy, or misinformation/disinformation.
- Empirical, conceptual, or theoretical contributions relevant to organizational resilience.

Exclusion:

- Studies focused solely on technical disaster modeling or environmental hazards without organizational or communicative dimensions.
- Research on misinformation outside crisis contexts (e.g., consumer product reviews, entertainment).
- Commentaries, book reviews, or non–non-peer-reviewed opinion pieces.

Screening Procedure

The selection process followed PRISMA 2020. Studies that were not pertinent were eliminated during the title and abstract screening phase. Two reviewers read the whole text separately, and the results were very reliable between them. Final eligibility testing made sure that the methods were strong and fit with the review's main idea.

Data Analysis

The research integrates qualitative thematic synthesis with bibliometric mapping:

Thematic coding: Articles were uploaded to NVivo for open and axial coding of concepts that appeared most prominent in the realms of leadership, communication, and governance of misinformation.

Bibliometric analysis: VOSviewer and Excel were employed to create a network of co-authorship, co-

citation, and keyword co-occurrence, reflecting the intellectual structure of the area.

Trend analysis: The quantity of publications from prominent journals and renowned authors, along with their geographic distributions, has been utilized to monitor fluctuations in research activity across time.

Reliability Measures

Several safeguards were implemented:

- Full documentation of search strings, filters, and inclusion/exclusion decisions.
- Dual screening to minimize bias.
- Cross-validation of thematic findings with bibliometric evidence to ensure consistency between qualitative insights and quantitative trends.

Bibliometric Analysis

To complete the thematic synthesis, documents from the Scopus database for the period 2000-2025 were analyzed, and it was observed that research on the subject has increased since 2010. Therefore, articles published between 2010 and 2025 were included. A bibliometric analysis of 246 documents has therefore been carried out. It attempts to map out in quantitative terms the research landscape on organizational crisis management at that intersection between leadership, communication, and misinformation mitigation. This is a dual perspective that places its vantage point atop both quantitative bibliometrics and qualitative thematic coding, thereby inculcating enhanced validity and comprehensiveness into the review (Donthu et al., 2021). The total corpus has already accrued a very substantial scholarly impact with an h-index that is indicative of a mature and influential body of work. What also emerges from the dataset is definite input coming in from multiple disciplines like management and organizational studies, as well as communication science and information systems.

Publication Trends

The timeline of publication output shows that academic interest has been steadily rising over the past twenty years. There has been a lot more output since the 2008 financial crash, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the rise in digital misinformation events in 2016. The years 2020–2024 are overrepresented in all outputs. This shows that even though current times always call for steady state volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA), there is also a strong need for crisis management scholarship (See Figure 1).

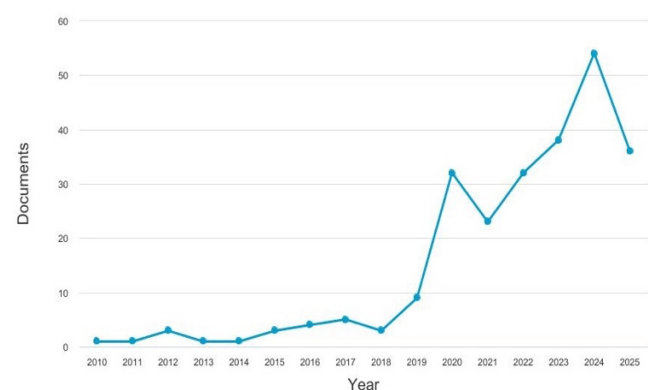


Figure 1. Documents by Year

Core Sources

The 15 most prolific sources predominantly comprise peer-reviewed journals specializing in crisis communication, leadership studies, public administration, and organizational resilience. Leading outlets such as Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management and Public Relations Review serve as primary publication venues, suggesting that the discourse is anchored both in applied organizational research and in strategic communication scholarship. This distribution further evidences the cross-disciplinary integration of management and media studies in addressing crisis phenomena (See Figure 2).

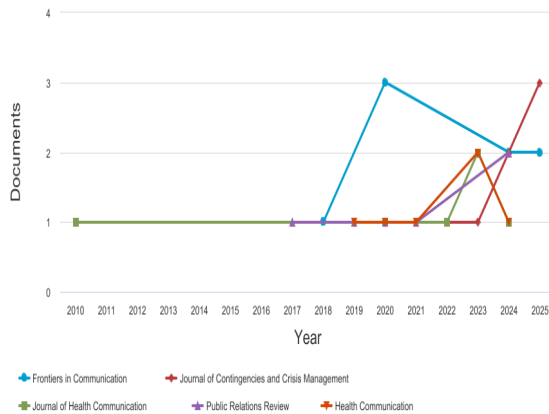


Figure 2. Documents per Year by Source

Authorship and Collaboration Patterns

The author's analysis identifies several prolific contributors whose work recurrently addresses the nexus of leadership, crisis communication, and misinformation control. Co-authorship patterns indicate the presence of transnational research networks, with frequent collaborations between scholars based in North America, Europe, and parts of the Asia-Pacific. Institutional affiliation data confirm that high-output universities and research institutes, often with dedicated crisis management or public policy centers, dominate the field. These institutions play a pivotal role in knowledge production and dissemination, reflecting the institutional embeddedness of crisis research (See Figure 3).

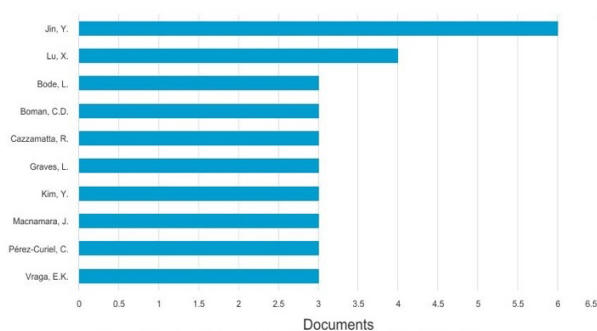


Figure 3. Documents by Author

Geographic Distribution

The geographic analysis reveals that the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada emerge as leading contributors in terms of

publication volume. This dominance may be attributed to both research funding availability and the presence of established academic infrastructures for crisis and communication studies. Nonetheless, emerging contributions from countries in Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America indicate a gradual diversification of the research landscape (See Figure 4).

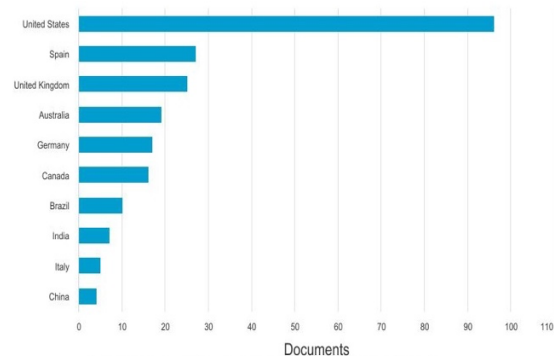


Figure 4. Documents by Countries

Keyword Landscape

The keyword co-occurrence analysis reveals four prominent thematic clusters that structure the field (see Figure 5):

- Human and Organizational Dimensions (Green Cluster) – Keywords such as human, humans, interpersonal communication, organization, and leadership emphasize the centrality of interpersonal trust, ethical decision-making, and communication in crisis contexts.
- Public Health and Pandemic Contexts (Blue Cluster) – Terms like COVID-19, pandemic, coronavirus disease 2019, public health, health communication, and epidemiology highlight how the COVID-19 crisis catalyzed scholarship on crisis communication and misinformation, especially in health-related contexts.
- Misinformation and Digital Media Ecosystems (Red Cluster) – This cluster is dominated by misinformation, disinformation, fake news, infodemic, social media, digital media, and media literacy. The density of this cluster reflects how digital platforms have accelerated the spread of false narra-

tives, creating significant challenges for organizations. Related terms such as debunking, fact-checking, and post-truth indicate the increasing importance of corrective and preventive strategies against disinformation.

- **Crisis Management and Strategic Governance (Cross-Cutting)** – Keywords such as crisis communication, crisis management, risk communication, crisis response, and strategic communication serve as bridging concepts across clusters. They underscore the integrative role of leadership, public health, and misinformation governance, while terms like decision making, ethics, and political communication reflect the strategic and governance-related dimensions of crisis response.

the coronavirus crisis in reshaping the research agenda. This dual emphasis on the pandemic context and the misinformation ecosystem empirically supports the integrative framework pursued in this review.

Document Types and Accessibility

The corpus is predominantly composed of research articles, supplemented by a smaller proportion of reviews and conceptual papers. While open access publications represent a growing segment, a significant share remains behind paywalls, potentially limiting the timely dissemination of findings to practitioners and policymakers, an important consideration given the applied relevance of crisis management research.

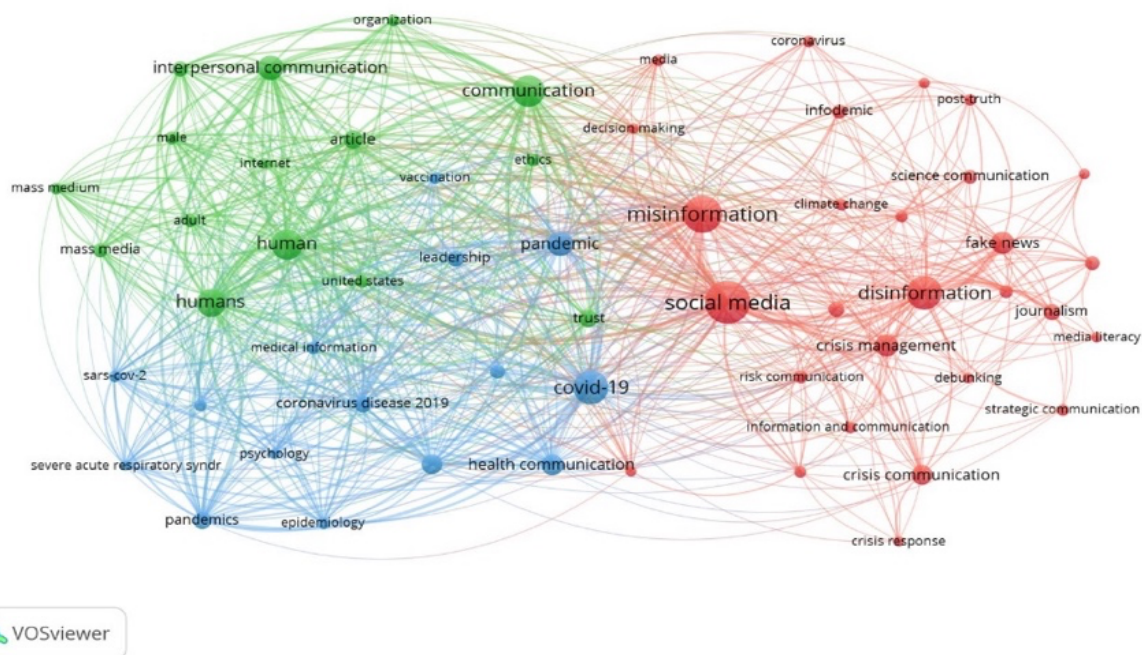


Figure 5. The keyword co-occurrence

Overall, the prominence of misinformation-related keywords (misinformation = 63 occurrences, disinformation = 52, fake news = 23, infodemic = 9) illustrates the field's thematic shift toward the governance of information disorder in recent years. Pandemic-related keywords (COVID-19, pandemic, public health) confirm the catalytic effect of

Citation Impact

Citation analysis highlights a set of highly influential works that have shaped the theoretical and empirical foundations of the field. The top-cited articles commonly address crisis leadership frameworks, the application of Situational Crisis Com-

munication Theory (SCCT), strategies for countering misinformation, and organizational resilience mechanisms. The concentration of citations among a subset of papers suggests a degree of canonical consolidation, where certain frameworks and case studies serve as reference points for subsequent research. (See Table 2)

The bibliometric mapping reveals a vibrant and expanding scholarly domain that is both thematically cohesive around leadership, communication, and misinformation and methodologically diverse. These quantitative patterns provide the empirical backbone for the thematic analysis presented in Section 5, ensuring that the synthesis is grounded in a robust understanding of the field's structure and evolution.

validity, the emerging thematic categories were cross-checked against bibliometric results, which provided an additional layer of verification. This process resulted in four interconnected themes: (1) crisis leadership practices, (2) organizational crisis communication strategies, (3) misinformation and disinformation management, and (4) integrated crisis response and resilience building. These themes illustrate how organizational crisis management must adapt to environments that are increasingly unstable, unpredictable, and information saturated.

Crisis Leadership Practices

Leadership is regularly identified as the critical factor influencing organizational responses to crises.

Table 2. Citation Overview

Rank	Year	Title	Authors	Journal	Citations
1	2011	Social media use by government: From the routine to the critical	Kavanaugh et al.	Government Information Quarterly	954
2	2020	Tourism in a world with pandemics: local-global responsibility	Jamal, & Budke,	Journal of Tourism Futures	677
3	2017	Using Expert Sources to Correct Health Misinformation in Social Media	Vraga, & Bode	Science Communication	602
4	2021	Evaluating the Impact of Attempts to Correct Health Misinformation on Social Media: A Meta-Analysis	Walter et al.	Health Communication	373
5	2020	Fighting fake news in the COVID-19 era: policy insights from an equilibrium model	Hartley & Vu	Policy Sciences	217
6	2022	Creating News Literacy Messages to Enhance Expert Corrections of Misinformation on Twitter	Vraga et. al	Communication Research	205
7	2021	Online Social Endorsement and Covid-19 Vaccine Hesitancy in the United Kingdom	Chadwick et al.	Social Media + Society	169
8	2020	A Failure of Political Communication Not a Failure of Democracy	Hatcher, W.	American Review of Public Administration	160
9	2017	Public information officers' social media monitoring during the Zika virus crisis	Avery, E. J.	Public Relations Review	150
10	2020	Not just conspiracy theories: Vaccine opponents and COVID-19 misinformation	Jamison et. al	Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review	148

Thematic Analysis

This thematic synthesis draws on both bibliometric mapping and qualitative coding of the 246 articles reviewed. Guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework, the analysis proceeded through open and axial coding in NVivo to identify recurrent patterns across leadership, communication, and disinformation governance. Coding was conducted by the author, with iterative refinement to ensure internal consistency. To enhance

Transformational leadership is essential for envisioning and fostering collective resilience, exemplified by Jacinda Ardern's empathetic and inclusive leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, which emphasized trust and collective responsibility (Wilson, 2020). Adaptive leadership facilitates navigation through uncertainty and decentralization in decision-making; for example, many firms that shifted to remote work during global lockdowns empowered teams to act autonomously, thereby sustaining operational continuity under volatile

conditions (Heifetz et al., 2009; Dirani et al., 2020). Servant leadership, grounded in empathy, stewardship, and community, has been acknowledged in contexts where social and ethical concerns are pronounced; organizations that prioritized employee well-being and mental health support during the pandemic gained legitimacy and stakeholder trust (Eva et al., 2019; Greenleaf, 2013). Across these models, sensemaking acts as a unifying mechanism: leaders do not merely make decisions but also interpret ambiguous environments and craft narratives that enable coordinated collective action (Weick, 1995). Ultimately, crisis leadership is evaluated not only by outcomes but also by the ability to sustain legitimacy, trust, and relationships under stress.

Organizational Crisis Communication Strategies

The second topic cluster is communication. A lot of the writing is based on SCCT and IRT. Both theories stress the need of framing messages and aligning them with the sort of crisis. Studies indicate that proactive communication, early disclosure, and transparency diminish uncertainty and inhibit the proliferation of disinformation. When reactive communication is delayed, it usually hurts the credibility of the organization. Recent studies document the transition to two-way dialogic communication models in digital environments, with an engaged stakeholder demographic participating in the co-creation of crisis narratives. A good strategy uses a lot of different channels and keeps the tone and content the same across all of them. It also finds a balance between technical accuracy and emotional impact.

Misinformation and Disinformation Management

It is the management of misinformation and disinformation, which has increasingly become one of the most critical challenges as per literature. An overabundance of misleading information undermines trust, accelerates decision paralysis, and increases reputational risks, contributing to the “infodemic” phenomenon. Organizational re-

sponses include real-time digital content monitoring, fact-checking partnerships, and algorithmic moderation with the technology platforms. A few studies highlighted that pre-bunking or inoculation strategies, where organizations motivate stakeholders to critically assess information even before a crisis takes place, have been resource-intensive but increasingly viewed as essential elements of preparedness. This demonstrates that communicators must now merge the traditional public expertise with data analytics, media literacy, and cross-sector collaboration work. Bibliometric results showing an upsurge of such terms as misinformation, disinformation, and fake news ascertain that this is no longer a peripheral concern; rather, it has become a defining feature of modern crisis contexts.

Integrated Crisis Response and Resilience Building

Another developing theme is the integration of leadership, communication, and disinformation management within comprehensive crisis governance frameworks. While logistics and resources cover the operational dimension, symbolic activities such as narrative framing and trust-building remain equally critical. Integrated Crisis Governance, in which a form of social contract underpins resilience, emphasizes not only recovery but also continuous learning through adaptation, after-action evaluations, cross-functional collaboration, and scenario-based training. In practice, however, translating such frameworks into action presents notable challenges. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic the World Health Organization (WHO) coordinated global “infodemic management” strategies, combining fact-checking, digital partnerships, and community engagement. Although these efforts enhanced resilience by fostering trust, they also revealed difficulties in balancing centralized coordination with local adaptability (Tangcharoensathien et al., 2020). Similarly, corporate responses to disinformation on social media such as airlines countering false narratives about flight safety or pharmaceutical firms addressing vaccine skepticism demonstrated the potential of integrated communication strategies but

also highlighted power asymmetries between governments, firms, and digital platforms (Lee et al., 2023). Moreover, resource constraints often prevent organizations from maintaining permanent cross-functional crisis units, and cultural as well as sectoral differences complicate the transferability of models. These tensions suggest that integrated frameworks, while theoretically compelling, require contextual adaptation and must carefully balance operational feasibility with ethical and political considerations.

Discussion

The analysis synthesizes bibliometric findings and shows that organizational crisis management is a multilevel construct shaped by the intertwined responsibilities of leadership, communication, and disinformation governance. These insights are situated within broader theoretical, socio-political, and cultural contexts, generating significant implications for both scholarship and practice. They highlight the necessity of integrating fragmented perspectives into unified frameworks that can better address the complexity of contemporary crises. Moreover, the findings underscore that resilience is not a static outcome but a dynamic process of adaptation and learning, contingent on both organizational capabilities and societal trust.

Leadership in Complex and Politicized Contexts

It has been reiterated that leadership during crises encompasses not only technical decision-making but also symbolic, ethical, and political dimensions. In external crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, forced migration, and ecological disasters, leaders must negotiate the legitimacy of their decisions not just with internal stakeholders but also with contesting publics. Transformational and adaptive leadership models are pertinent as they facilitate equitable meaning-making and collective agency in the face of uncertainty, in accordance with sense-making theory (Weick, 1995) and concepts of institutional trust (Mishler & Rose, 2001), which contend that the adequacy of interpretive capacity, coupled with legitimacy, influences lead-

ership performance during crises. Feminist and decolonial leadership perspectives underscore the importance of fairness, inclusivity, and participation in decision-making while addressing crises of structurality.

Crisis Communication as a Social and Cultural Process

The findings reinforce that crisis communication is not merely a technical task of message dissemination but a socially and culturally embedded process. Communication strategies are shaped by media ecologies, historical narratives, and collective identities. In polarized environments, misinformation not only distorts facts but also reconfigures perceptions of belonging, trust, and authority.

The change of models from broadcast to dialogic and participatory models reflects the broader recognition of stakeholders as active meaning-makers. This is consistent with Habermasian perspectives on the public sphere, whereby communication processes are central to negotiations around legitimacy and democratic accountability. Empirical evidence supports the claim that dialogic approaches foster greater transparency in reducing avenues for the proliferation of rumors and enhancing the commitment of stakeholders.

Misinformation Governance and the Politics of Information

The increasing prominence of misinformation-related keywords in the data set highlights the necessity of merging misinformation management with crisis management. Yet, this merger is not solely operational; it is deeply political. As more endeavors are made to supervise, fact-check, and moderate digital content, concerns about freedom of speech, algorithmic responsibility, and the imbalances of power between organizations, governments, and tech platforms become more pronounced.

This situation is what Wardle & Derakhshan (2017) call an "information disorder." It's when campaigns of false information make democratic processes less stable and at the same time make society more divided. The research reviewed reveals

that answers necessitate cross-sectoral alliances, partnerships between civil society and fact-checking activities, as well as ethical frameworks that reconcile the preservation of truth with the right to communication. In this context, organizational crisis management increasingly intersects with discussions on algorithmic governance and digital authoritarianism.

Integration as a Pathway to Organizational and Societal Resilience

One of the most important things this evaluation does is put together leadership, communication, and misinformation management into one big strategic competency. These frameworks do not regard resilience as a fixed attribute related to recovery; instead, they contextualize it within the fluidity of adaptation, change, and learning.

Looking at things from a systems point of view, organizations are resilience nodes in big social and political ecosystems. Their ability to work together across sectors, engage stakeholders, and manage a contested information environment not only helps organizations survive but also helps society recover and rebuild trust in democracy. This perspective aligns with resilience theory (Duchek, 2020; Cameron & Dutton, 2003), which asserts that adaptation and learning are crucial for long-term sustainability.

Scholarly and Practical Implications

The amalgamation of leadership, communication, and misinformation management necessitates an endeavor to reconcile established frameworks such as Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) and resilience-based models with emerging scholarship in misinformation science, computational propaganda, and sociotechnical governance. Practically, it implies that organizations must invest in multi-domain crisis capabilities, combining ethical leadership, transparent communication, and proactive misinformation management. Organizational crisis management in the age of misinformation is best understood as a strategic, integrative, and ethically embedded practice. It requires attention not only to operational efficiency

but also to the cultural, political, and informational contexts in which crises unfold.

Research Gaps and Future Directions

Although the reviewed literature provides significant insights into crisis leadership, communication, and misinformation governance, the analysis also reveals several important gaps. Addressing these limitations will be essential for advancing both theoretical foundations and the practical relevance of organizational crisis management scholarship.

Geographic and Cultural Representation

The bibliometric mapping demonstrates a strong concentration of scholarship in Anglo-American and Western European contexts. This geographic imbalance risks producing culturally specific frameworks that may not be generalized to other socio-political environments. In practice, studies attempting to include diverse contexts face several challenges. Limited access to reliable data and publication outlets in the Global South often restricts visibility of local scholarship (Canagarajah, 2002). Crisis research in conflict-affected or authoritarian settings is further constrained by political sensitivities, censorship, and risks for both researchers and participants (Clark & Cavatorta, 2021). Moreover, methodological tools developed in Western contexts may fail to capture the cultural meanings of leadership, trust, and communication in non-Western societies, leading to partial or distorted interpretations (Powell & Colyvas, 2008). Future studies should therefore integrate perspectives from the Global South, postcolonial societies, and conflict-affected regions, employing decolonial and feminist methodologies to surface alternative crisis imaginaries and broaden theoretical inclusivity.

Longitudinal and Process-Oriented Research Designs

The majority of studies employ cross-sectional designs or focus on single crisis events, which limit understanding of how organizational capabilities evolve over time. Future research should adopt longitudinal and process-oriented approaches to

trace leadership decision-making, communication dynamics, and disinformation interventions from the preparedness stage through to post-crisis learning. Possible designs include multi-wave panel surveys that capture changes in stakeholder perceptions across different crisis phases, longitudinal case studies that follow organizations before, during, and after major crises, and diary or experience sampling methods that document decision-making under uncertainty in real time (Ohly et al., 2010). Process-tracing methods could also be applied to reconstruct sequences of crisis response actions and evaluate causal mechanisms over time (Collier, 2011). In addition, mixed methods design combining computational text analysis of crisis communication with follow-up interviews or focus groups could generate richer insights into evolving narratives. Such methodological diversification would illuminate the temporal dynamics of crisis management and the conditions under which adaptive and transformative capabilities emerge.

Integration of Misinformation Science and Crisis Leadership

While misinformation management has become a salient theme, it is often treated as a sub-component of communication rather than an integral dimension of crisis leadership. Future research should more explicitly integrate insights from misinformation science, cognitive psychology, and algorithmic governance into leadership studies. Interdisciplinary approaches could employ computational text analysis and network analysis to track the real-time spread of disinformation and examine how leaders intervene at key nodes of influence (Vosoughi et al., 2018). Experimental and behavioral designs drawn from cognitive psychology could be used to test how leaders' framing strategies mitigate biases such as confirmation bias or motivated reasoning during crises (Pennycook & Rand, 2021). Furthermore, adopting sociotechnical governance frameworks (Helberger et al., 2020) could help explain how leadership decisions interact with platform algorithms and regulatory mechanisms to shape the visibility of crisis-related information. Such methodological and conceptual inte-

gration would allow future research to move beyond treating misinformation as a peripheral communication issue and instead theorize it as a core component of crisis leadership capacity.

Multi-Level and Cross-Sectoral Approaches

Current scholarship predominantly operates at the organizational level, neglecting interactions across micro (individual), meso (organizational), and macro (institutional) levels. Future work should adopt multi-level frameworks to explore, for example, how employee resilience interacts with organizational communication strategies or how sector-specific regulatory environments shape misinformation governance. Cross-sectoral comparisons, such as between public health, humanitarian relief, and corporate domains, would further enrich theoretical development by highlighting divergent institutional logics.

Ethical and Political Dimensions

Despite growing attention to misinformation, relatively little scholarship engages with the ethical and political consequences of crisis strategies. Partnerships with technology platforms, content moderation practices, and algorithmic monitoring raise fundamental questions about transparency, accountability, and democratic freedoms. Future studies should adopt critical perspectives that examine these ethical dilemmas and assess their long-term implications for organizational legitimacy and societal trust.

Methodological Innovation

The research has predominantly utilized prevalent survey and case study methodologies; nevertheless, there exists a significant opportunity for methodological diversification, including participatory action research, computational text analysis, network analysis, and arts-based research. These methodologies can encapsulate the intricacies of crisis narratives while fostering dialogue amidst a growing movement among researchers to adopt more collaborative and participatory research frameworks. Subsequent research ought to

embrace methodologies that are more spatially comprehensive, chronologically dynamic, theoretically integrative, and methodologically diverse. These significant advancements enable scholars to provide substantial insights into how companies and their sociocultural contexts confront, adapt to, and derive lessons from crises, particularly in the setting of misinformation.

Conclusion

This review positions organizational crisis management at the intersection of leadership, communication, and disinformation governance, drawing on evidence from 246 peer-reviewed articles published between 2010 and 2025. Findings reveal that while each of these domains has matured independently, their integration remains limited, resulting in theoretical fragmentation and practical blind spots. In an era where crises are shaped not only by operational disruptions but also by contested truths and pervasive information disorder, this gap underscores the need for a holistic approach. Disinformation governance refers to the institutional and strategic mechanisms designed to counter intentional falsehoods, whereas information disorder represents the broader societal condition in which misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation converge to undermine trust and democratic accountability. Recognizing this distinction allows crisis management to be reframed as an interdisciplinary practice requiring integrated capacities. Effective crisis leadership should therefore be conceptualized as more than technical decision-making; it must encompass ethical authority, transparent communication, and proactive management of disinformation. Practical examples illustrate this interplay: Jacinda Ardern's empathetic briefings during COVID-19 show how ethical and transparent leadership builds legitimacy, while the WHO's infodemic management framework demonstrates the necessity of combining fact-checking, social listening, and community engagement in digital environments. Similarly, corporate experiences during airline crises highlight how operational responses must be accompanied by rapid correction of online rumors to protect reputational legitimacy. These cases illustrate

that resilience is achieved not only through logistical preparedness but also through the capacity to manage the complex dynamics of digital information flows.

Theoretically, advancing this field requires integration between established frameworks such as Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), resilience-based models, and image repair theory with emerging insights from misinformation science, cognitive psychology, and algorithmic governance. Such integration could generate new conceptual models explaining how leaders anticipate, interpret, and respond to distorted information in real time. Methodologically, future research should move beyond cross sectional designs and adopt longitudinal, multi-level, and participatory approaches to capture the temporal and socio-political complexities of crisis situations. Moreover, greater engagement with non-Western and subaltern perspectives is essential to counteract the dominance of Anglo-American scholarship and to develop culturally inclusive frameworks. In practice, organizations are advised to invest in ethical leadership that prioritizes transparency and empathy, to develop digital media strategies that combine real time monitoring with fact-checking partnerships, and to establish integrated governance structures that link operational logistics with symbolic communication. Embedding these practices not only enhances organizational resilience but also contributes to restoring legitimacy and societal trust. Organizational crisis management in the age of disinformation should thus be understood as a strategic, interdisciplinary, and ethically embedded practice. By embracing integration across leadership, communication, and information governance, both scholars and practitioners can better address the challenges of increasingly volatile, uncertain, and information saturated environments.

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