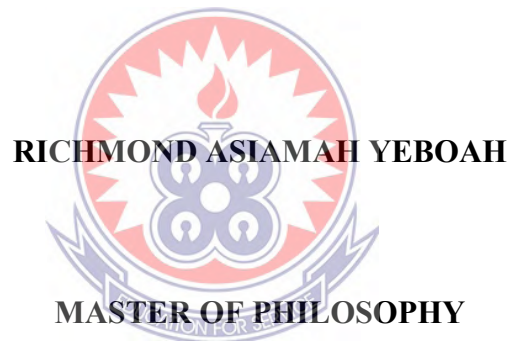


**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**CRISIS COMMUNICATION IN THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY: A  
CASE STUDY OF TOBINCO PHARMACEUTICAL LIMITED**



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CASE STUDY OF TOBINCO PHARMACEUTICAL LIMITED**

**RICHMOND ASIAMAH YEBOAH**

**8171810010**



**A dissertation in the Department of Strategic Communication, School of  
Communication and Media Studies, submitted to the,  
School of Graduate Studies, in partial fulfilment**

**of the requirements for award of the  
degree of Master of Philosophy  
(Business Communication)  
in the University of Education, Winneba**

**NOVEMBER, 2021**

## DECLARATION

### STUDENT'S DECLARATION

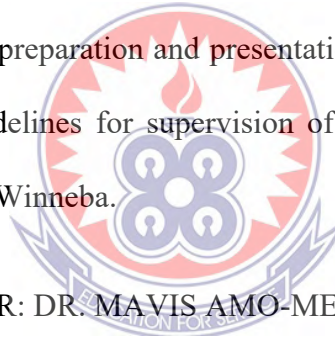
I, **Richmond Asiamah Yeboah** declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE: .....

DATE: .....

### SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of Dissertation as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.



NAME OF SUPERVISOR: DR. MAVIS AMO-MENSAH

SIGNATURE: .....

DATE:.....

## **DEDICATION**

To all mothers especially my Noble mother Gladys Andoh who believed in me and made my dream a reality, I am deeply grateful MAMA and I love you dearly



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT(S)

My earnest praise and appreciation goes to my God Almighty who has sustained my life until now. But for His mercy, where will I be?

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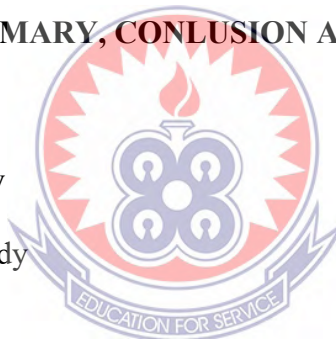
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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined crisis communication strategies in the pharmaceutical industry. Crisis communication is one of the relevant issues which has become area of interest to many PR scholars but most of their studies focused on crisis communication in the financial sectors. This points out a gap in the literature on the peculiar strategies and approaches employed Pharmaceutical industries in Ghana during crisis event. The study specifically focused on the 2013 crisis of Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited (TPL). This case study draws on Coombs' situational crisis communication theory and William Benoit's image restoration theory to assess the nature of crisis in TPL, the response strategies employed by the company and how those response strategies were communicated by TPL. Interview and content analysis were used for the study and the data collected were thematically analysed to get the key issues raised by participants for the purpose of the study. The study revealed three nature of crises: organisational, financial and natural crises. The study also discovered denial, diminish and rebuilding response strategies used by TPL. Findings from the study confirmed that TPL communicated the response strategies through open communication, media engagement and apology to deal with the 2013 crisis events. The study highlights the importance of rebuilding strategy during the events of crises and the need to engage stakeholders and communicate the truth during crisis. The study recommends that pharmaceutical industries should prioritise stakeholders' engagement and make their institutions easily accessible to national crisis management institutions.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Background to the Study

Public relations (PR) has long been linked to reputation management (Broom, 2009; Schultz & Kitchen, 2000). According to Broom and Sha (2013), Public relations is the “management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure depends” (Broom & Sha 2013, p.2). Reputation is of enormous value to organisations, whether commercial, governmental or not-for-profit (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000). A good reputation serves as a pathway for organisations to reach their goals, stay competitive and gain acceptance or approval among their respective stakeholders (Black, Carnes, & Richardson, 2000).

Although reputation is an intangible asset representing a firm’s past actions to deliver value outcomes to multiple publics (Mahon, 2002), it remains a very important tool in achieving a competitive advantage for any organisation (Schultz & Kitchen, 2000). PR practitioners are therefore constantly engaged in research, strategy and planning in communicating on behalf of management in order to establish and maintain a mutually beneficial relationship between the organisation and the publics (Broom, 2009; Schultz & Kitchen, 2000). However, it is important to note that reputation does not occur by chance. It relates to leadership, management and organisational operations; the quality of products and services; and – crucially – relationships with stakeholders, as suggested by Argenti and Druckenmiller (2004).

Emergency situations often disturb the mutually beneficial relationship between the organisation and the publics as well as threaten the very existence of the

organisational growth, (Hamidovic, 2012). Hamidovic (2012) contends that since businesses operate in precarious environments, creating and maintaining a business continuity plan increases awareness of threats, prepares the organisation for potential disruption and helps ensure that the organisation has the resources and information needed to deal with such emergencies. An organisation must design a risk assessment process in order to identify the threats and vulnerabilities of its important operations and supporting resources in order to set up and operate an effective business continuity management system; it is also vital to analyse the consequences of an identified danger becoming an incident and causing a business disruption. (Hubbard, 2009; Smith & Elliot, 2006). Jaques (2014) argues that it is a major mistake to treat issue and crisis meanings interchangeable when dealing with them. Not only do they have very distinct meanings, but they need a different management response. Jaques (2014) further explains that when turbulence strikes an organisation, it can be easy to misinterpret the situation as a crisis. Any matter that is out of the ordinary to every day operations can feel like crisis, when often it is an issue that can, with the correct management, avoid escalation into a full-blown crisis.

From studies such as Ahiafor (2019) and Sapriel (2003), it can be argued that issues and crisis are closely related but different. Issues can be the warning signs that crisis is possible. Often than not, it is the unattended problems or issues that lead to crisis in organisations, Kent (2010) argues. Thus, issue management can be regarded as a powerful tool for crisis prevention. In fact, a crisis has been known to be described as an issue that was not managed (Ashcroft, 2016; Jaques, 2014). In the thinking of scholars like Heath (2010), the reality is that issues and crises are very different in nature and need to be managed in different ways. According to Heath (2010), the difference in nature can be illustrated by this analogy: Issue management is steering

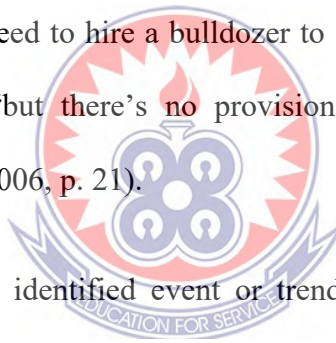
the ship out of troubled waters. Crisis management is trying to save the ship after it has struck an iceberg. In other words, it would make no sense at all to be changing course to avoid icebergs if the ship is already sinking and people are drowning.

In conferring on the difference between issues management and crisis management, Ashcroft (2016) establishes that the main difference between issues management and crisis management is the time-scale. An issue can develop over time into a major crisis. Issues management and crisis management have a mutual relationship due to the fact that issues can create crisis and crisis can create issues (Heath, 2010). Furthermore, Heide (2006) points out that in a management context, another key difference has to do with choice. According to Heide (2006), issue management is designed to allow organisations explore all possible choices, weigh the benefits of each option, and make an informed decision. Typically, the more you explore the issue the more possible choices open up. For example, you might analyse the communication benefits of a media release versus a press conference versus a one-on-one interview and the options of newspaper versus radio versus television versus social media. In crisis the choices become fewer rather than more as the situation develops. When a television news crew and the media pack are waiting outside your door, the options of media release versus a press conference versus a one-on-one interview no longer seem to apply.

Harth (2010) also alludes to the fact that when facing an issue, the public relations department of the organisation can research all the facts, analyse the views of key stakeholders, and obtain independent expert opinion to ensure nothing has been overlooked. In crisis the organisation often has to make decisions without knowing all

the facts, when it is still unclear exactly what happened and why, let alone who was responsible and what it will cost, but you still have to go with that you do know.

Another significant key idea is that issues management and crisis management explored in literature is the idea of impact and cost by scholars like Falkenheimer and Heide (2006). Falkenheimer and Heide (2006) emphasises that when organisations are facing an issue, potential cost is an important consideration. It might, for example, be cheaper to simply cease manufacturing a troublesome product than to publicly defend the product or to implement restrictive new regulatory requirements. By contrast, cost is usually not an immediate consideration when facing crisis. If heavy equipment is needed to rescue men from a mine collapse; or if you have to undertake costly medical tests; or if you need to hire a bulldozer to stop leaking chemicals reaching a river; no-one will say “but there’s no provision for that in this year’s budget” (Falkenheimer & Heide 2006, p. 21).



Likewise, an issue is an identified event or trend which could have a significant impact on the organisation. That impact is often measured in terms such as market share, reputation, community concern, licence to operate, recruitment, financial cost, regulatory compliance, stock price, capacity to retain and expand business, and so on. Some of those same impacts may apply in the longer run to crisis, but much more importantly, a genuine crisis is an event which has already happened and threatens life, property or the environment, or threatens the capacity of the organisation to carry on business or achieve its strategic objectives (Falkenheimer & Heide, 2006).

While many unethical options exist and are frequently used by organisations in crises, extensive studies have been conducted to determine best practices in crisis communication. These are agreed-upon practices that are not only effective in

managing crises, but also are ethical. Coombs asserts that the best crisis communication practice is to respond quickly, accurately, and consistently (Coombs, 2010). Failing to respond quickly “lets others provide the information that will frame how the crisis will be perceived by stakeholders,” (Coombs 2010, p.28) which “allows others to control the crisis” (Canel & Sanders 2010, p.41). Accuracy and consistency should be utilised in order to build credibility in the midst of crisis. Coombs claims that “inconsistencies create confusion and make crisis managers appear to be incompetent” (Coombs 2010, p. 29).

Other scholars concur with their studies and add the following: select and maintain a central spokesperson, build relationships and trust with the public, as well as with the media, acknowledge mistakes, take public fear and perceptions into consideration, construct and train a crisis handling team within the organisation, practice simulations of crises, convey the organisation’s message in a clear, concise way, sincerely show sympathy and concern, keep stakeholders and the public updated on recovery efforts, and analyse management of the crisis and learn from the experience (Ashcroft, 1997; Covello, 2010: 150; Heath, 2006; Ulmer, 2007; Vigso, 2010).

Furthermore, Covello (2010) adds that relationships with the media, as well as a comprehensive risk communication plan should be developed in advance. Covello (2010) also asserts that “a briefing book should be prepared in advance with answers to the most frequently asked questions by reporters” and that answers to these questions should be prepared “in accordance with the principles of message mapping” (Covello 2010, p. 150). In “*Best Practices in Crisis Communication: Evolution of Practice through Research*,” Heath (2006) claims that exhibiting honesty, candour, and openness, meeting the needs of the media and remaining accessible, being

committed to serving as the first and best source of information, and delivering messages of self-efficacy all constitute what he considers to be best practices for managing and communicating during crises.

Effective crisis communication also hinges on the communication skills of the leader of an organisation or an elected spokesperson. According to Covello (2010), successful leaders in the midst of crisis “listen to, acknowledge, and respect the fears, anxieties, and uncertainties of the many public and key stakeholders; remain calm and in control; take ownership of the issue or problem; are visible or readily available; continually look for opportunities to repeat the prepared key messages; acknowledge uncertainty; as well as seek, engage, and make extensive use of support from credible third parties” (p. 152).

Crisis response is an important function of crisis management team in every organisation. The failure of crisis response strategy can cause damages to stakeholders and their organisation; that is the damages may include reputational threat, financial loss and even end the existence of the organisation (Tella *et al.* 2020). Best practices of PR practitioners include their ability to protect organisations from reputational damages. So a set of lessons garnered from this study on crisis response strategy would be very vital resource to crisis response team. Numerous research have been conducted by PR practitioners and scholars from different academic disciplines on crisis communication, Adu-Gyamfi and Amankwah (2021), nevertheless, less attention has been given to crisis communication response strategies in the pharmaceutical industry. The study is therefore situated in context of crisis communication response strategies in the pharmaceutical industry in Ghana.

According to Hubbard (2009), sudden disturbances that threaten the very livelihood of an organisation can be broadly described as a crisis. An organisation can be said to be experiencing a crisis situation when that organisation is undergoing anything that could threaten a major product line, business unit, financial performance or harm the health and wellbeing of consumers, employees, surrounding communities, or the environment (Mitroff, 2005; Venette, 2003). Crises implicate an organisation's reputation in ways that can lead to both economic and reputational challenges (Coombs, 2014). A sudden, unexpected disturbance that threatens an organisation can damage or to great extent, affect the organisation's reputation if it is not carefully managed. Regardless of the size, reputation or industry, there is always a possibility for every organisation to face any type of crisis situations (Venette, 2003).

The former United States Secretary of State, Dr. Henry Kissinger once told President Richard Nixon that "an issue ignored is a crisis ensured" (Keya, 2012, p.23). Keya (2012) however, observes that the term crisis brings different meanings to different people. According to the Publicly Available Specification (PAS) published in 2011 by the British Standards Institution, crisis is an inherently abnormal, unstable and complex situation that represents a threat to the strategic objectives, reputation or existence of an organisation. Regester (1995) adds that crisis can be best described as an event that causes the organisation to become the subject of widespread potentially unfavourable attention from the media and other external groups such as shareholders, politicians, trade unionists and environmental pressure groups that, for one reason or another, have vested interested actions of the organisation.

Although what constitutes crisis is not easily agreed upon, researchers have tried to categorise various dimensions of crises (Coombs, 2014; Fearn-Banks, 2012; Pauchant



& Mitroff, 2015). For instance, Pauchant and Mitroff (2015) divided crises into technical, economic, human, and social crises. Fearn-Banks (2012) however, introduced types of crises as external economic attacks, mega-damage, external information attack, breaks, psychological and internal crises. Coombs (2014) categorised crises as victim crises (minimal responsibility), natural disasters, rumours, workplace violence, product tampering/malevolence, accident crises (low responsibility), challenges, technical-error accident, technical-error product harm, preventable crises (strong responsibility), human-error product harm and organisational misdeeds which can affect the reputation of an individual or an organisation.

Heath (2010) argues that a crisis situation can simply erupt by an unassuming piece of news being disseminated through media outlets or social networks, then find recipients at large, which leads to the state of agitation and uncertainty within the target of the crisis. In a narrow framework, crisis can be limited to avoid negative media coverage; however, this is only related to the communication side of a crisis. Crisis prevention, mitigation and communication response starts with a strategic business plan and "...the integrity and legitimacy of the organisation are central to the theme of crisis" (Heath, 2010, p. 23).

According to Hargis and Watt (2010), crisis can be experienced at any stage of an organisation's life cycle because risks and hazards are diverse. Sutton and Tierney (2016) aver that crisis communication has three phases: pre-crisis (prevention and preparation), crisis response (actual response to a crisis) and post crisis (preparation for the next and commitments during crisis with follow up- information) which requires level of responsibility.

After crisis strikes, it is crucial that the organisation in crisis responds to its stakeholders immediately. This is where crisis responsibility connects with crisis response strategy (CRS) (Sutton & Tierney, 2016). Sutton and Tierney (2016) further aver that CRS are what the organisation in crisis says and does after a crisis. They affect how stakeholders perceive the organisation as well as the crisis itself. Based on the stakeholders' perception, the organisation in crisis can determine which CRS is or are more suitable to protect its reputation. Crisis management is a proactive process which involves dealing with the crisis before it happens, during the crisis and aftermath (Simola, 2014). Crisis management is a proactive process that entails dealing with the crisis before, during, and after it occurs. The purpose of crisis management is to protect the organisation, sector or the stakeholders from damage and prevent or diminish the negative outcomes of crisis (Coombs, 2014; Simola, 2014).

While there may be several different theories and strategies to guide crisis communication, extant research shows that there are only three main stages that construct the crisis communication model. These three stages are pre-crisis planning and preparation (preventative), crisis response and management (active), and post-crisis repair and learning (reflective) (Burnett, 2013; Coombs, 2010; Fearn-Banks, 2002; Jaques, 2017).

Several scholars have indicated that these stages as listed above are important to consider, as effective communication strategies should differ as a function of the crisis timeline (Burnett, 2013; Coombs, 2010; Fearn-Banks, 2002; Jaques, 2017). The pre-crisis phase is anticipatory and preventative in nature and includes scanning the environment for potential risks and possible crises (Burnett, 2013; Penrose, 2000).

According to Burnett (2013), “early identification permits time for analysis and strategising” (p. 14). After scanning the environment, preventative planning takes place, which includes establishing information and warning systems, as well as assigning roles and responsibilities, testing and training of crisis communication plans, and conducting simulations (Burnett, 2013; Coombs, 2010; Jaques, 2007). Coombs (2010) highlights that the first phase which is the pre-crisis phase is concerned with prevention and preparation. He notes that, prevention and preparation is chiefly concerned with what can be said or done to reduce the chance of crisis and moderate its harm if it occurs.

The second phase in the crisis communication model is response to and management of the actual crisis. This stage pertains to the actual responses by the organisation to the crisis to lessen the magnitude of harm to the organisation and its stakeholders (Burnett, 2012). During this phase, a crisis management response is chosen and implemented, damage is mitigated, as well as stakeholders and the media are informed and managed (Jaques, 2007). This phase also entails targeting messages to the public and handling any negative publicity in order to salvage reputation (Burnett, 2012; Jaques, 2007).

The last phase in the model is the post-crisis phase, which is reflective and includes continuation of crisis communication, reputation repair, and organisational evaluation and learning (Coombs, 2010). During the post-crisis phase, operational recovery, financial costs, share price protection, and business momentum are addressed, as well as any litigation or injury or death investigations managed. The media and the public should be continuously informed and the manner in which the crisis was handled is scrutinised and evaluated. Additionally, the crisis communication plan is adapted and

implemented for future use if necessary (Jaques, 2007). Coombs (2010) reiterates that the post-crisis signify a period of revision, follow-up information, lessons learned, and preparation for a possible ensuing crisis in the future.

Although scholars like Pearson and Mitroff's (2016) present a detailed classification by dividing crisis communication into a five phase model of signal detection, preparation and prevention, containment and damage limitation, recovery, and learning. Nonetheless, the descriptions are very similar, except that Pearson and Mitroff's (2016) model do not explicitly use the same expressions such as pre- and post-crisis management yet, all authors describe the same management functions.

Crisis situation creates need for information and that need is fulfilled with communication. Coombs (2014) differentiates between two types of crisis communication: 'crisis knowledge management' and 'stakeholder reaction management.' Crisis knowledge management involves collecting information, analysing the information gathered, sharing what is learned and decision-making. The stakeholder reaction management on the other hand involves efforts to influence the organisation's stakeholder groups through communication. This may be accomplished through words or what is done, the deed (Coombs, 2014).

It is claimed that although scholarship in crisis has augmented both public relations and management fields recently, crisis situations of different types are common in all cultures (Coombs, 2014; Heath, 2010; Simola, 2014). The way leadership handles crisis most often has an impact on its relationship with the employees. Communication during and after crisis therefore is an important tool in maintaining the reputation of the organisation which has experienced crisis (Kim, 2013). According to Bosumtwi (2015), many organisations in the world have experienced

different types of crises such as; the BP oil rig explosion which resulted in millions of gallons of oil spilt in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010; the collapse of the Melcom building in Achimota, Ghana; Johnson & Johnson and Tylenol product tampering and the nationwide energy crisis of Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) in the year 2015. In Ghana, one of the organisations that has been riddled with a major crisis situation in recent times is Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited (TPL). This study explores how Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited managed a crisis situation in 2013 along with the crisis management and communication response strategy.

### **1.1 An overview of Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited**

According to the 2016 report by Ghana Pharmaceutical Association (GPA), Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited (TPL) is one of the leading brand pharmaceutical companies in Ghana. It was established in the year 1994 by the then Mr. Samuel Amo Tobbin now Dr. Samuel Amo Tobbin and was officially registered in 2003 in Greater Accra, Ghana. It is headquartered in Kokomelemele in Accra and has numerous branches in Ghana. TPL produces Antibiotics, Anti-malarial, Antidiabetic and hypertensive, cough and cold products, food supplements and other kinds of pharmaceutical products (GPA, 2017).

TPL has historically focussed on the marketing and distribution of particularly Anti-malarial (ACTs) and in recent times, it increased its range to cover over the counter drugs (OCTs), Antibiotics, Antidiabetic and hypertensive, cough and cold products. TPL faced a major crisis in the year 2013 when the company was accused by the Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) of supplying unapproved drugs to customers. The FDA therefore seized and destroyed large consignments of unregistered drugs from TPL. The FDA proceeded to impose a GH¢40,000 fine on TPL as well as locked up all

warehouses belonging to TPL, further deepening the rift between the two bodies (Agyeman, 2016; Peprah, 2017).

The feud between the two parties degenerated into a media war, with FDA sticking to its ground that TPL had violated some regulations, while TPL insisted that it has done nothing wrong. Subsequently, the company's (TPL) warehouses and factories throughout the country were all closed down (Peprah, 2017).

The Parliamentary Committee on Health, in the process of the ongoing media war, called for a halt in the conflict between TPL and FDA. In a statement released by the Parliamentary Committee on Health, it described the media war between one of the country's biggest drug distributors and its regulator as an exercise that would not be in anybody's interest owing to the fact that, TPL has over 200 workers whose livelihood had been grossly affected as a result of the crisis situation. The Parliamentary Committee on Health however appealed to both parties to act quickly, so that the situation can be resolved (Agyeman, 2016; Peprah, 2017).

In 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2014, the then Deputy Health Minister, Dr Alfred Tia Sugri declared that all outstanding issues with TPL and FDA had been resolved. Thus, TPL was successfully cleared to resume full operation in its marketing and distribution of drugs (Agyeman, 2016; Peprah, 2017). In spite of the damages TPL suffered as a result of the crisis situation with FDA, their brand still holds as one of the leading brands in Ghana. TPL has proceeded to win many awards including Company of the year (2017) by Ghana Pharmaceutical Industry in 2018, Top anti-malaria brand (2015) award organised by Ghana Medical Association in 2016, Product of the year (Lonart, 2015) as well as, the most trusted brand of the year in 2013 (Alaxin, 2018).

It is in this context that this study seeks to examine the nature of crisis the company faced as well as examine the response strategies they employed to communicate crisis.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

According to Radtke (2011), crisis that challenges an organisation's relationship with its stakeholders may result in loss of reputation. Communication, therefore has become an important tool in enhancing reputation and protecting relationships as well (Radtke, 2011). Eliasson and Kreuter (2000) argue that one major impediment with crisis is how to define the actual 'crisis variable' and the way to deal with such variable. The rise in organisational establishments has led to spikes in crisis, making crisis communication very essential to every organisation (Kim, 2013).

A considerable number of works have been conducted on crisis and crisis communication (Adu-Gyamfi & Amankwah, 2021; Osei, 2020; Tella *et al.*, 2020; Thompson, 2020; Baerug, 2017; Bosomtwi, 2015; Chance, 2011; Kim, 2013; Pancie, 2010; Radtke, 2011). Kim (2013) did a study on the role of social media in general public relations practice and crisis communication using Starbucks. The study details the actual role of social media in the practice of crisis communication through the experience of practitioners and the reaction of the public.

Radtke (2011) focused on analysing how google responded to the public outcry during the introduction of street view in Germany and whether the crisis could harm the company's overall reputation. Baerug (2017) also explored how the Norwegian government and the Norwegian police security service successfully managed to communicate an imminent terror threat to the general public during the summer of

2014 using a qualitative approach anchored on a single study. Most of these studies were conducted in the American and European context (Baerug, 2017; Chance, 2011; Radtke, 2011; Pancie, 2010).

Studies in Ghana on crisis communication strategies in certain industries are available online. For instance, Adu-Gyamfi and Amankwah (2021) conducted a study on effective communication during a global health crisis using a content analysis of the Presidential Addresses on the COVID-19 in Ghana. The study employed qualitative approach and found that seven PR best practices were used by the President of the Republic of Ghana to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Tella et al. (2020) also focused on crisis communication and Ghana's financial sector. Ahiafor (2019) on the other hand studied the strategies for mitigating the effects of crisis in Microfinance institutions in Ghana looking at how microfinance companies overcame the microfinance crisis in Ghana. Biritwum (2015) specifically looked at crisis communication preparedness and its effect on reputation while Bosumtwe (2015) on the other hand examined the internal communication strategies and channels used by Electricity Company of Ghana limited and the perceptions of employees on those channels used in communicating crisis –related information. Upon extant search on popular and well stocked research databases like Google Scholar and SCOPUS, no research on crisis communication response strategies was identified in the Ghanaian pharmaceutical industry. This points to a gap in the literature on the peculiar strategies and approaches to crisis that could exist in the pharmaceutical industries in Ghana. This study therefore seeks to investigate the nature of crisis and the crisis response strategies employed by Pharmaceutical industries in Ghana, with special focus on Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited (TPL).



### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

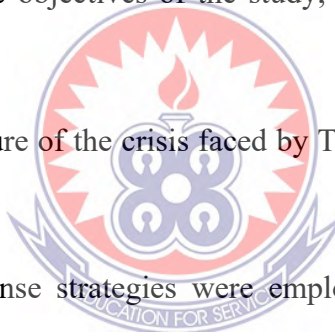
This study aimed at examining the crisis response strategies employed by Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited. The objectives of the research are:

1. To investigate the nature of crisis faced by Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited in 2013.
2. To examine the crisis response strategies employed by Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited to communicate crisis.
3. To explore how the crisis response strategies by TPL were communicated.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

To be able to achieve the objectives of the study, the research aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What was the nature of the crisis faced by Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited in 2013?
2. What crisis response strategies were employed by Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited to communicate the crisis?
3. How were the response strategies communicated by TPL?



### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Crises are inevitable in every organisation. This calls for PR practitioners to pay key attention to crisis management so as to provide the needed solutions to crises. The study aimed at examining the crisis response strategies employed by Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited. The study will add to the extant literature on crisis communication, thereby extending the frontiers of knowledge specifically in the areas of nature of crisis and response strategies adopted by organisations in communicating

crisis. This study will help close the gap between the literature on how pharmaceutical industries respond to crises, the decisions they make, and why they make them. This study will help to advance the field by pointing to new connections between the findings and frameworks of other studies. The findings from this study will also help stakeholders in the field of crisis management to put in place measures to improve issues related to crisis. Again, the study will inform organisations on the relevance of crisis communication and the appropriate responses needed during crisis. Finally, the study will provide an impetus for further research in the area of crises management, thus, serving as a reference material to others who wish to undertake research projects in the area of crises management.

#### **1.6 Delimitation of the Study**

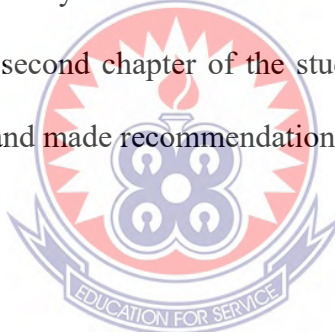
The study focused on investigating the nature of crisis faced by a Ghanaian pharmaceutical industry namely Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited (TPL) in 2013 and interrogates the response strategies that were employed by TPL in communicating crisis. The aim is also to ascertain a case analysis of how the crisis response strategies were communicated by TPL in 2013.

The motivation of this study is based on some assertions in Bosumtwi (2015), Tella et al. 2020 which state that most studies in crisis communication by researchers were done in the area of financial sectors unlike health related issues.

The selection of Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited is to enable the researcher to gather credible information on crisis response strategies in the pharmaceutical industry.

## 1.7 Organisation of the Study

The study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the introductory chapter which includes the background of the study, the objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation and the organisation of the study. The second chapter presents a review of literature on the study and outlines the theoretical framework underpinning the study. The third chapter presents the methods through which data was collected for analysis. Aspects of this chapter include the research approach, research design, sample and sampling technique, data collection instruments, data collection procedure and method of data analysis. The findings and discussions of the data collected were discussed under the fourth chapter of the study. Data gathered from the study were discussed in themes and analysed using the theories discussed in the second chapter of the study. The fifth chapter presents the summary of the findings and made recommendations for further studies.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature on crisis, crisis communication, crisis management and crisis response strategies as a way of identifying central issues and integrating what other researchers have done in this study. The source of information were mainly primary and secondary data. The materials for the review were gathered from libraries, textbooks, published and unpublished articles and journals from scholars in relation to the area of the study. It further explicates the theories of situational crisis communication theory and Benoit's image restoration theory and shows the relevance of the theories to the study.

#### 2.1 The Nature of Crisis

According to Coombs (2014), there is no universally accepted definition of crisis; and while many other definitions of crisis exist, some commonalities are prevalent in all definitions. Extant research reveals that a crisis includes some degree of uncertainty, regarding when it will arise and what the outcome will be (Barton, 2011; Seeger, Sellnow & Ulmer, 2008). Barton (2011) for example, defines crisis as "an incident that is unexpected, negative, and overwhelming" (p. 11).

Studies reviewed suggest that crisis is traditionally seen as an unusual situation or unexpected event that can affect individuals or organisations, may cause financial and reputational damage, or can threaten stakeholder relations (Coombs, 2014; Ulmer, Sellnow & Seeger, 2007). According to Coombs (2014), crisis is "the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and has the

power to seriously impact an organisation's performance and generate negative outcomes" (p.10). Crises may therefore violate stakeholders' expectations of how the organisation should act, which threatens the relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders. When the organisation does not meet its stakeholders' expectations, the stakeholders perceive the organisation less positively, which may result in a harmed reputation (Coombs, 2014). Thus, Coombs (2014) reiterates that crisis is crisis when stakeholders believe that crisis exists.

Seeger, Sellnow and Ulmer (2008) emphasise that crisis is unanticipated, and add that crisis is often perceived as a threat to an organisation's goals. Additionally, Jaques (2007) maintains that crisis can disrupt normal business within an organisation, as well as threaten its reputation and financial livelihood.

Crises can occur in varying forms, ranging from political crisis, corporate crisis, to racial or religious crisis (Ulmer, Sellnow & Seeger, 2007). Benoit (2017), on the other hand, argued that although crises come in a variety of forms, some potential crises can be anticipated. An airline, for example, has to expect an airplane crash every moment, just as a restaurant should always be prepared for cases of food poisoning. Crisis events can range from property damage or loss, loss of life, environmental harm, to questionable decisions of the management (Fediuk, Coombs & Botero, 2010; González-Herrero & Pratt, 2016).

Studies on organisational communication reveal that increasingly organisations are conducting business across international borders and incidents in one country can affect the whole organisation. Globalisation has increased crisis threat, as crisis do not occur as isolated events anymore; single events have the potential to expand to world-wide crisis (Pearson & Clair, 2016). Crises are more and more likely events for

organisations, due to rapid technical development and globalisation among other reasons, and every organisation can be affected (Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2007). As Pearson & Mitroff (2016) avow “... people want to believe that it could not happen to them. It not only can, but unfortunately, the probability is very high that it will” (p. 44). Crisis destabilises the normal order in organisations and managers are forced to respond rapidly to radical changes, disruptions, and uncertainty caused by crises situations (Pearson & Mitroff, 2016; (Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2007).

A growing number of studies have also established that crises are inevitable however, it is the manner in which an organisation handles crises that determines how the public will respond to the said crises (Coombs, 2014; Fearn-Banks, 2012; Pauchant & Mitroff, 2015). Pauchant and Mitroff (2015) for instance, argue that when an organisation’s negligent actions cause harm to humans, the environment, or the economy, public outrage is unavoidable and deserved. Therefore, it is in an organisation’s best interest to react responsibly in order to prevent future harm. To add to it, Coombs (2014) maintains that no matter how efficiently an organisation responds to a crisis situation after it has occurred, the possibility of reputational damage or serious financial loss still exists. Therefore, crisis communication in the field of public relations is an area that is essential to the success of any organisation. Understanding how to plan for and effectively manage crises is pivotal, Coombs (2014) adds.

Pearson and Clair (2016) in their discussion on organisational crisis and crisis communication suggested that it is reasonable for an organisation to be seen dealing with a crisis situation when stakeholders believe that the said situation is enough to be considered as a crisis condition. Pearson and Clair (2016) further aver that an

organisation is supposed to be seen tackling crisis situation vigorously because the organisation's image and reputation depend on how its stakeholders regard the organisation. In the view of Fink (2016), crisis may present a "turning point" in many organisations due to the pervasive impact that they can have upon operations and livelihoods (p.12). Regester (2012) argues along the same line that crises can have either positive or negative outcomes and that "opportunity and threat are more a function of the outcomes of crisis management rather than a defining characteristic of crisis" (p. 6). It can be well argued that both Fink (2016) and Regester's (2012) position on crisis as mentioned above suggests that crisis management and crisis communication are interconnected and progressive terms.

Fink (2016) asserts that risks are related to crises and if neglected can cause crisis. Risk communication is a dialogue between the organisation as a risk creator and its stakeholders as the carriers of risk. Risk has the potential to inflict harm or exposure to loss, and crisis can expose an overlooked or undervalued risk. Effective risk management can prevent crisis and the crisis managers' aim is to assess risks in time and reduce them before they develop into a crisis (Coombs, 2010). Fink (2016) further notes that image is essential to organisations, corporations, government bodies, as well as individuals. Reputation is the image stakeholders have for an organisation based on the fact of how well an organisation meets their expectations. Effective crisis communication minimises the reputational damage of crisis and is therefore a tool in the effort to build and maintain a positive reputation (Coombs, 2010; Fink, 2016).

## 2.2. Crisis Communication and Crisis Management

Corporate Apology, Impression Management, and Image Restoration Theory are the three main areas of crisis communication literature (Coombs, 2007). All three methods provide typologies of post-crisis reaction communications tactics. Furthermore, Coombs (2007) classified the crisis communication literature according to its emphasis: form or content. The 'form' literature stresses what action should be performed, such as responding quickly, consistently, and openly. The 'content', on the other hand, emphasises the substance of the communications; for example, managers must express sorrow for the victims (Coombs, 2007).

Several scholars have indicated that these stages as listed above are important to consider, as effective communication strategies should differ as a function of the crisis timeline (Burnett, 2013; Coombs, 2010; Fearn-Banks, 2002; Jaques, 2017). The pre-crisis phase is anticipatory and preventative in nature and includes scanning the environment for potential risks and possible crises (Burnett, 2013; Penrose, 2000). According to Burnett (2013), "early identification permits time for analysis and strategizing" (p. 14). After scanning the environment, preventative planning takes place, which includes establishing information and warning systems, as well as assigning roles and responsibilities, testing and training of crisis communication plans, and conducting simulations (Burnett, 2013; Coombs, 2010; Jaques, 2007). Coombs (2010) highlights that the first phase which is the pre-crisis phase is concerned with prevention and preparation. He notes that, prevention and preparation is chiefly concerned with what can be said or done to reduce the chance of crisis and moderate its harm if it occurs.



The second phase in the crisis communication model is response to and management of the actual crisis. This stage pertains to the actual responses by the organisation to the crisis to lessen the magnitude of harm to the organisation and its stakeholders (Burnett, 2012). During this phase, a crisis management response is chosen and implemented, damage is mitigated, as well as stakeholders and the media are informed and managed (Jaques, 2007). This phase also entails targeting messages to the public and handling any negative publicity in order to salvage reputation (Burnett, 2012; Jaques, 2007).

The last phase in the model is the post-crisis phase, which is reflective and includes continuation of crisis communication, reputation repair, and organisational evaluation and learning (Coombs, 2010). During the post-crisis phase, operational recovery, financial costs, share price protection, and business momentum are addressed, as well as any litigation or injury or death investigations managed. The media and the public should be continuously informed and the manner in which the crisis was handled is scrutinised and evaluated. Additionally, the crisis communication plan is adapted and implemented for future use if necessary (Jaques, 2007). Coombs (2010) reiterates that the post-crisis signify a period of revision, follow-up information, lessons learned, and preparation for a possible ensuing crisis in the future.

Although scholars like Pearson and Mitroff's (2016) present a detailed classification by dividing crisis communication into a five phase model of signal detection, preparation and prevention, containment and damage limitation, recovery, and learning. Nonetheless, the descriptions are very similar, except that Pearson and Mitroff's (2016) model do not explicitly use the same expressions such as pre- and post-crisis management yet, all authors describe the same management functions.

Crisis communication scholars have developed various approaches to categorise crisis types. Classifications comprise crisis types by cause, intent, responsibility, or time-scale. Parsons (2014) divided crisis into three different types: immediate, emerging and sustained. Mitroff (2004), on the other hand, assigned crisis events into seven major groups: economic, informational, physical, human resources, reputational, psychopathic acts, and natural disasters. Seon-Kyoung and Huei (2010) used Mitroff's (2004) definition in their study and added an eighth category which they referred to as general crisis. Seon-Kyoung and Huei's (2010) idea of general crisis signified a mixed of all seven major crisis groups described by Mitroff (2004).

One of the most used definitions of crisis types in literature is Coombs' (2010) and Holladay's (2010) categorisations of crisis responsibility. The authors talk about victim crisis, which attributes minimal organisational crisis responsibility (e.g. natural disasters, rumours, workplace violence, product tampering, and malevolence); second is accident crisis, which assigns low organisational crisis responsibility (e.g. challenges, technical error accidents, and technical error product harm); and third is preventable crisis, which attributes strong organisational crisis responsibility (e.g. human-error accidents, human-error product harm, and organisational misdeed).

Research also shows that the greatest blame and most responsibility attributed to an organisation by stakeholders and public occur when the crisis is perceived as having been preventable. Human-error accidents, for example, are associated with strong perceptions of responsibility. The assumption is that if the organisation had done something, for instance trained their employees properly, the crisis could have been prevented. People assign little responsibility to an organisation if it is perceived to be

the victim of others' actions or the crisis is caused by technical accident such as faulty parts or a natural disaster (Coombs, 2010; Holladay, 2010).

Ulmer et al. (2007) instead grouped crises by intentional acts of individuals and unintentional, unforeseeable events. Intentional crisis includes acts such as terrorism, sabotage, workplace violence, poor employee relationships, hostile takeovers, and unethical leadership. The unintentional crisis category includes natural disasters, disease outbreaks, unforeseeable technical interactions, product failure, and downturns in the economy.

These three stages are pre-crisis planning and preparation (preventative), crisis response and management (active), and post-crisis repair and learning (reflective) (Burnett, 2013; Coombs, 2010; Fearn-Banks, 2002; Jaques, 2017).

Scholars have long recognised communicating during crisis as one of the most important elements during a crisis event, according to Avery and Lariscy (2010). The main goal of every organisation's crisis communication strategy is to enable seamless communication during crisis both within the organisation (internal publics) and outside of the organisation (external publics). Thus, the leadership and Public Relations (PR) teams use communication tools to share information to the stakeholders during the crisis (Fediuk et al., 2010). The appropriate crisis communication can thus assist to lessen the crisis and aid in crisis recovery (Fediuk et al., 2010). Specifically, corporate communication practitioners need to step up to the plate to unlock the value of communication during a crisis situation (Avery & Lariscy, 2010). Ulmer (2001) indicates that how crisis response strategies are communicated can influence relationship outcomes during crisis events.

Boz and Küçükaltan (2013) employed case study and qualitatively analysed six large Turkish firms from diverse sectors. The study objective examined and compared the crisis preparedness system, crisis experience, and organisational features. The study found out that companies that have disaster preparation strategies are more prepared, according to the findings. Furthermore, firms who had previously faced a crisis had superior crisis preparedness systems, even though their readiness was not reliant on employee population size. The study also revealed that organisations that were able to detect prospective crisis risks to their organisation throughout the crisis readiness phases were able to effectively plan for future crises. This backs Kovoov *et al's* (2000) claim that firms would overcome or avert crises by proactively discovering the sources of future crises, establishing preventive warning systems, and continually learning from experiences.

Fowler, Kling, and Larson (2006), on the other hand, conducted a quantitative assessment of organisational preparation for catastrophic disasters. The purpose of the research was to determine if organisations in the South-Western United States were prepared to successfully withstand a severe potential crisis or tragedy at work. The study established that, managers at all levels had a stronger inclination towards preparation than their employees, according to the study's results. Also, firms with a large number of employees (more than 500) were better prepared for a crisis than smaller companies. Lando (2014) found that top-level management is more likely to provide biased information in support of their organisation in a study on the critical roles of crisis communication plans for corporations' crisis preparedness and management.

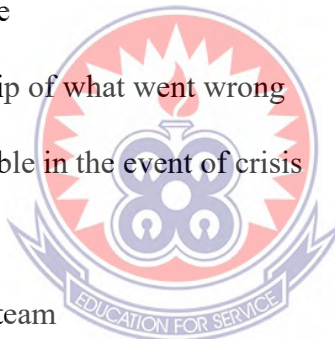
Another study, conducted by Selart, Johansen, and Nesse (2012), examined how crisis prevention plans affect workers' reactions to risk circumstances and their welfare. Assumptions were made that leadership crisis planning would reduce employee perceptions of risk and increase staff well-being. The researchers decided to conduct a survey among managers and workers of two private (two) and three public sector businesses. After testing hypotheses, the researchers found that workers' perception of risk at work is strongly reliant on their understanding of crisis preparation in the businesses they work for. Most crucially, the study found that crisis preparedness resulted in well-developed crisis prevention strategies. In addition, crisis preparedness has a favourable impact on employee behaviour, overall well-being, and risk perception, in addition to its primary goal of preventing or coping with crises.

To explore how inefficient communication may lead to organisational crises, Kukule (2012) conducted a case study and purposively selected and interviewed eight workers (from an unidentified organisation) at three distinct levels of the organisation studied. The study found that, internal communication crisis directly related to organisational crisis in line with Abdullah and Antony's (2012) study. As a result of irregular or unbalanced formal internal communication, weak leadership, the absence of values, a fragile organisational culture, and active grapevine communication, employees believed that the crisis in internal communication at the company had occurred.

Hunter, et al. (2002) performed a comprehensive review of existing literature on crisis communication methods in both the civilian and military contexts in order to develop a typology of successful crisis communication for Department of Defence (DoD) public affairs professionals. They examined the benefits of a proactive crisis

communication plan against the more usual reactive reaction to crises using O'Connor's (1987) social-political theory. The results showed that, depending on the situation at hand, the proactive crisis communication typology outlines twelve essential techniques to include or exclude from an effective public affairs crisis communication strategy. These techniques include:

- Creation of solution team
- Gathering of essential facts
- Clearing of table of other responsibilities of the team
- Teamwork
- Being poised and positive
- Over-communicate
- Absolute ownership of what went wrong
- Present and available in the event of crisis
- Stay focused
- Evaluate solution team
- Real crisis
- Refreshing of goals



Penrose (2000) investigated the relationship between the perception of crises as dangers or opportunities and the efficacy of crisis communication. According to the study, organisations that see crises as possible opportunities are more proactive in crisis preparedness and report more effectiveness in managing meaning during a crisis, which is unsurprising. The development of an integrated crisis management team, as well as proactive crisis preparation, are the foundations of such a philosophical bent, according to Penrose, and are therefore strongly advocated.

Miller and Horsley (2009) explained how companies may effectively handle a crisis by going through the stages of enactment, selection, and retention. During the enactment phase, members of the organisation must be alert to environmental signs that may suggest problems or a crisis before it arises. The retention phase eventually assists the organisation in developing a set of processes and policies to implement when crisis situations occur, as outlined by the selection and enactment stages.

Howell and Miller (2009) examined Maple Leaf Foods, Inc.'s crisis management strategy amid a significant product recall in 2008 involving Chinese milk products. Coombs' (1998) SCCT was used to assess their reaction to the recall and the inferred image threat to the firm (Howell & Miller, 2009). This research study evaluated publicly available papers from Maple Leaf Foods as well as online media coverage of the events surrounding the large recall. According to the findings, Maple Leaf Foods first recognised the crisis's major drivers and escalating elements, and then implemented the rebuilding approach proposed by SCCT to reduce negative effects on their reputation.

Coombs (2006) studied how major stakeholders of an organisation view the crisis response techniques specified by the SCCT. Coombs (2006) wanted to see how the ten existing crisis response techniques clustered based on the three alternatives of denying the existence of the problem or minimising the severity of it, or dealing with it. Coombs (2006) asked 78 undergraduate students to assess each of the 10 crisis response techniques on their capacity to protect victims in a crisis and their organisation's willingness to assume responsibility for the incident. The study found that "Deal" tactics was seen as equal to admitting complete responsibility for the incident, its cause and all of its consequences for victims and stakeholders. To

counteract this risky response, Coombs (2006) identified the "deny tactics" as the riskiest of all three groups. In the past, it was considered that diminishing techniques were employed most commonly in unintentional occurrences and had a minimal impact on both stakeholders and victims.

Hartmann (2011) studied hotel sector in Finland to promote awareness among hoteliers, employees, investors, stakeholders, government officials, and students in hospitality-related disciplines, the study's objective was to highlight the current situation and the actions taken by hotel management to ensure visitors a safe and secure stay. In this study, qualitative research methods were employed in the investigation. According to the study, chain hotels are more prepared for crisis situations than individual hotels.

The studies of Heide and Simmonson (2015) and Johansen, Aggerholm and Frandsen (2012) demonstrates a divergence not just in technique, but also of how people perceive crises in an organisation. To the former, crisis might arise at any time with varied dimensions which would demand both management and people to be attentive on selecting cues. Heide and Simmonson (2015) also stressed on the role of employees in every phase of a crisis. However, Johansen, Aggerholm and Frandsen (2012) opted to focus their study on management's involvement in crisis communication. They also investigated what management viewed of employees amid a crisis. Management focused on contingency plans to crisis mitigation, contrasting Heide and Simmonson's (2015) suggestion to include employees via conversations and cooperation, with the view that crises cannot be managed successfully with over dependence on already prepared contingencies.



Mazzei and Ravazzani (2011) utilised a mixed method approach to examine the effectiveness of internal communication inside Italian firms during the 2008-2009 global economic slump. The study conducted through interviews and questionnaires, demonstrated the necessity of establishing excellent internal connections in organisations across and among all levels of the organisation prior to the onset of any crisis. Their study argued that when relationships are weak prior to crisis, well-planned, continuous internal communication programs will fail because those plans will most often be met with misinterpretations and resistance. They contended that this was due to a lack of trusting connections before to the crisis. Their research accentuated relationships as the key to crisis resolution, even in the midst of crisis communication strategies. Their research also found that attentive listening, particularly from senior management, is critical to internal crisis communication. When other individuals believe their ideas are being ignored, they acquire a sense of isolation and marginalisation (Tourish, 2005).

Miller and Horsley (2009) performed research on the high-risk coal mining sector and how such companies manage crisis communication. In 2006, the West Virginia coal mining community gained news after an explosion trapped 13 workers. The authors demonstrated, via the use of sense-making theory, how organisations may successfully handle a crisis through the stages of enactment, selection, and retention. The implementation phase needs members of the organisation to be aware of environmental signals that may suggest impending difficulty or catastrophe. The retention phase assists the business in developing a set of processes and policies to implement in response to crises situations established during the selection and enactment stages.

### 2.3 Role of Crisis Communication and Crisis Management

Scholars have long recognised the important role communication plays in effective crisis management. Communication decisions can make a vital difference in how the public perceives the organisation during and after the crisis (Hale, Dulek, & Hale, 2015, Sapriel, 2013). Falkenheimer and Heide (2016) even state that “risk and crisis communication are the core of public relations practice and theory” (p. 181). Crisis communication is a critical important component of crisis management and has received much attention in crisis research over the last few decades (Sapriel, 2013).

Bechler (2016) states that crisis communication is the “vehicle which drives exigency” (p. 3). Organisational crisis communication messages play a vital role in crisis situations; they provide information for those affected by the crisis and assist in reducing the damage and impact of the crisis on the organisation (Fediuk et al., 2010). Crisis communication operates in a unique environment due to the immediate risk of significant loss, time pressure, and stress (Hale *et al.*, 2005). Heath (2010) points out that “the best-communicated crisis is the one that puts things right the most quickly and ethically” (p. 9).

Crisis management is yet another critical organisational function (Ulmer, 2001). Failure in this regard can result in serious harm to stakeholders, losses for an organisation or end its very existence, Ulmer (2001) adds. Crisis management is the identification of threats to an organisation and its stakeholders, and the methods used by the organisation to deal with these threats (Fediuk et al., 2010). Inferring from the above assertions by Ulmer (2001) and Fediuk et al. (2010), it is evident that crisis management is how organisation takes steps to mitigate a crisis situation. Due to the heightened exposure of organisations to natural and human catastrophes, crisis

management is an expanding area of interest. It is one of the dominant areas in public relations research and a crucial organisational function. Crisis management is a tool designed to fight crisis, minimise the inflicted damage and protect the organisation, stakeholders and industry from harm. Crisis management processes include preventative measures, crisis management plans, and post-crisis evaluations (Coombs, 2007).

Sapriel (2013) states that crisis management must be directed from the top of the organisation and implemented in all key business functions. She points out that research illustrate that most organisational crisis originate with management inaction or neglect and are non-event-related. Bad business judgement or mismanagement (corporate, individual, or governmental) is more likely to threaten organisational existences than one-time events, Sapriel (2013) adds. Furthermore, Heath (2010) posits that conventional management is often of little use in crisis situations and it does not help with coping or preventing crisis. Also, conventional ways of thinking are often the cause of major crisis as examples such as Ford/Firestone, Enron/Andersen, or the Mad Cow disease demonstrate, Mitroff (2004) notes. Crisis management and crisis communication are interconnected with the areas of issues management, risk communication, disaster communication, and reputation management (Harth, 2010).

Communication, particularly during a crisis, directly affects public and stakeholder perceptions of the organisation which can affect the long-term interests of the organisation. Successful crisis communication can restore stakeholder confidence and protect the organisation's reputation (Gregory, 2008; Massey & Larson, 2006). Falkenheimer and Heide (2006) maintains that crisis communication and crisis

management are the main value of public relations and stakeholder relationships in difficult situations, especially when organisations have to face risks and crisis. Pearson and Mitroff (2016) nevertheless contend that crisis communication and crisis management are “two of the same thing” (p.32). According to Pearson and Mitroff (2016), both crisis communication and crisis management signify a process designed to prevent or lessen the damage a crisis can inflict on an organisation and its stakeholders.

Similarly, Heath (2010) emphasises that crisis communication plays an integral role in managing crisis situations. Thus, many organisations, have crisis communication and crisis management teams in the public relations department. These crisis communication and crisis management teams addresses internal and external key publics, crisis team with a media spokesperson, crisis experts, crisis emergency personnel, crisis control room, equipment and supplies, key messages, dissemination of key messages, crisis pre-information, news releases, and evaluation techniques (Gregory, 2008; Harth, 2010; Massey & Larson, 2006).

One very good example of successful crisis management and communication is the Tylenol crisis in 1982. The Johnson and Johnson brand faced capsule tampering, resulting in deaths of customers. Johnson and Johnson immediately launched a massive public relations campaign to inform the public and recalled 31 million of Tylenol capsules. The company brought the product back into the market with tamper-resistant packaging, but after another product tampering in 1986, the company substituted the capsules with pills and caplets. These potentially ruinous incidents were managed effectively and the quick and open response helped not only the company to recover quickly in market share as well as in stakeholder confidence, it

also made the Tylenol case one of the textbook examples of how to manage a crisis (Shrivastava, Mitroff, Miller & Miglani, 2008).

Jordan (2003) examined the 1999 financial crisis at Ashanti Goldfields, when the firm fought to escape bankruptcy after the failure of its financial derivatives scheme. The researcher examined three phases of Ashanti Goldfield's crisis communications strategy. The first stage involved stabilising and managing communication in order to restore calm to the investment community; the second stage involved educating and informing investors via communication; and the third stage involved recoupling with investors in order to rebuild investment interest and Ashanti Goldfield's stock value (Jordan, 2003). While this study offered important insight into the practical implementation of strategic communication strategies during times of financial crisis, it lacked a theoretical framework. Reber and Gower (2006) examined Enron's and WorldCom's public communication tactics throughout their respective financial disasters. The researchers examined Enron and WorldCom's outbound corporate communications as well as press coverage of their financial catastrophes to ascertain if the main message was pushed by a public relations team or a legal counsel. The results indicated a combination of the two, implying that legal and public relations teams collaborate in conveying a corporate message (Reber and Gower, 2006).

Crisis management and crisis communication have increased in importance and have become established corporate disciplines in the last twenty years. Studies show a drastic growth in published articles related to crisis management and crisis communication. In fact, crisis management and crisis communication has been one of the three main areas of public relations research in the last two decades (Ki & Shin, 2005; Seon-Kyoung & Huei, 2010). Although research in crisis management and

crisis communication has largely increased, scholars have argued that understanding the relationship between crisis management and crisis communication is essential in order to enact preventative measures against crises, to devise a plan of action for when crises arise, to execute effective strategies to remedy crises, as well as to evaluate the effects of crises and decisions made along the way. Furthermore, knowledge regarding the array of crises that may develop, underlying theories to guide crisis management, and effective and unsuccessful crisis communication and management strategies is beneficial in order to react to crises in such a manner that is advantageous for an organisation's stability and reputation, as well as for the public (Heath, 2010; Kent, 2010; Ki & Shin, 2005).

According to Fearn-Banks (2001) Pre-assigning tasks postulates there is a designated crisis communication Team (CCT) who plans and response to crisis. A proper crisis management plan (CMP) is a reference tool during crisis. It provides details of key contact information, reminders of what has to be done during crisis. Barton (2001) and Coombs (2007a) argue that crisis communication plan saves time during crisis by pre-assigning tasks, collecting of needed information and aids crisis communication team to know their responsibilities on how to respond to crisis. CMP gives a clear cut on the training programs which will help crisis management team to get the needed knowledge on crisis management. Engelhardt *et al.* (2004) posits that, the readiness and preparedness to answer questions, accuracy and consistency of timely information are vital in dealing with crisis which is plays pivotal role in calming of nerves and restoration of image. They further argue that the inability of CCT to proactive in the course of crisis event may go a long to affect stakeholders.

## 2.4 Crisis Response Strategies

Coombs (2010) defined crisis response strategies as what an organisation does and says after a crisis has hit, identifying three components of an effective crisis response. First, a successful response should provide instructing information that tells stakeholders how to protect themselves physically during the crisis. Second, the response should provide adjusting information that conveys to stakeholders exactly what happened to cause the crisis as well as a description of the events of the crisis. The instructing and adjusting information must be given in a timely and consistent manner, and the organisation must be open and honest with its stakeholders (Huang, 2008). Last, only after the organisation has provided instructing and adjusting information to its stakeholders in a timely manner, then it begins to employ responses to manage its reputation with its stakeholders (Coombs, 2010).

The primary response strategies can be collected in three postures: The denial posture, the diminishment posture and the rebuilding posture. When using the denial posture, the organisation can try to deny or remove any connection with the crisis. When using the diminishment posture, the organisation can try to reduce attribution of organisational control of the crisis. When using the rebuilding posture, the organisation can try to improve its reputation and regain confidence in order to recover its image by taking on responsibility. Each of the three postures represent different strategies with similar communicative goals reflecting the amount of responsibility that an organisation seems to accept in a crisis and how much sympathy it seems to have for the victims in the crisis (Coombs, 2010; Huang, 2008).

The bolstering posture strategies, also referred to as secondary strategies, can be applied as a supplement to the primary strategies, and they are intended to build a

positive connection between the stakeholders and the organisation (Coombs, 2010). When a strategy is accommodative and shows concern for the victims, the stakeholders will often perceive the organisation as taking more responsibility for the crisis, while the defensive strategies are intended to move responsibility away from the organisation. This can either be perceived as more or less reliable or unreliable by the organisation's stakeholders (Coombs, 2010).

Coombs (2010) suggests that it is not unlikely that the organisation will use more than one crisis response strategy. With few exceptions, the strategies can be used in a variety of combinations.

According to Sellnow (2012), when crises do strike, organisations follow one of three general paths: inaction or no response, routine solutions that draw upon pre-crisis planning, or original solutions that are created specifically for a crisis. Sellnow (2012) asserts that “while routine responses to crisis, such as blaming and firing individuals, can salvage an organisation's legitimacy, original solutions that signal change within an organisation can ‘enhance a perception of preventative, long-term change and renewed social legitimacy’” (p. 23). This claim implies that original solutions, created specifically for a particular crisis, may serve as the best path of action.

According to Mersham and Skinner (2002), centralising all media interactions with a single spokesman reduces the likelihood of contradictory remarks. Kaufmann et al. (1994) further suggest that a single person be designated to manage public communications since organisations that do not do so in advance may find themselves confronted with a bewildering variety of conflicting messages when actual emergencies strike. Coombs (1999) adds that reacting regularly throughout a crisis is also recommended in order to make communications believable. In the event of a



major crisis, it is often suggested that the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) serve as the organisation's spokesman (Fearn- Banks, 2002; Mersham & Skinner, 2002). In contrast, Irvine and Millar (1998) believe that the CEO should not be the organisation's main spokesman during a crisis. The argument given is that if the CEO makes a mistake or fails to communicate the essential ideas in a compelling, empathetic manner, no one else in the organisation can repair the harm (Irvine & Millar, 1999). According to Kaufmann *et al.* (1994), the spokesman should change based on the situation. Although the media would like this individual to be the CEO, it is not necessarily the best option. Because the CEO may be lacking in some areas, like as technical expertise, he or she may be less successful (Kaufmann et al, 1994).

However, Augustine (1995) contends that in cases when the organisation's reputation or survival is really threatened, the CEO should be on the front lines. In most instances across the world, crisis communication experts considered the CEO as the most suitable person to manage the crises that they were faced with due to their perceived seriousness, such as online fraud, hostile takeover, and acts of non-executive chairman. As a result, it seems that the selection of a spokesman should be based on the type and severity of the crisis scenario. An essential requirement for any spokesperson is that he or she be available to meet with media and answer their questions during the crisis (Engelhardt *et al.* 2004). During a crisis, the CEO's readiness to answer questions and even physically meet with media and accept phone calls from reporters is an example of Druckenmiller's (1993) corporate image preservation via accessibility to the CEO in action.

In order to prevent journalists from getting information from unauthorised sources during the early stages of a crisis, businesses should have spokespeople available at

all times, according to Holladay (2009). Organisations must establish positive working connections with journalists and media sources in order to ultimately use the power of publicity to assist maintain the company's reputation rather than wreaking more damage. Holladay (2009) conducted study in which he examined two chemical crisis events and the media coverage that resulted as a consequence of the accidents. Each accident was reported in detail by newspapers and television news broadcasts alike. A total of 14 image restoration techniques, developed by Benoit (1995; 2007), Coombs (1995; 2007), Allen and Caillouet, among others, were used for each media article to tag and categorise it (1994). Attacking the accuser, denial, scapegoating, suffering, justification, compensation, apology, repentance, rectification, bolstering, transcendence, and ingratiating were some of the tactics used by the accused. Organisation spokespersons, government officials, first responders, industry experts, and other people served as sources for the plans, which were categorised based on their affiliation with the organisation. It was discovered that just 3.3 percent of the comments provided by organisational leaders were classified as repair plans, according to the results of the research (Holladay, 2009).

Transcendence, denial of choice, and integration were the techniques that were used. It was found that organisational leaders used media channels to convey information rather than engaging in face-saving tactics in the vast majority of instances. As information adjusters, first responders were often assigned to specific techniques or to provide new information rather than the methods or information they were originally assigned. In addition, the data revealed that first responders were the most often cited sources. According to the findings of the study, the content analysis showed that a large percentage of businesses did not use appropriate crisis communication

strategies. While organisational leaders and spokespeople were quick in their responses, they lacked a strategic approach to media relations.

## **2.5 Crisis Communication Research In Ghana**

Studies on the concept of crisis communication have been done by some scholars in Ghana. Most of these studies focused on crises in financial sectors, mining industries and other institutional bodies. For instance; Adu Gyamfi and Amankwah (2021) conducted a study on effective communication during a global health crisis using a content analysis of Presidential Addresses on the COVID-19 in Ghana. Their study employed qualitative approach and found that all the seven PR best practices were used by the President of the Republic of Ghana to address the COVID-19 pandemic. They concluded that, action steps, expression of accountability and empathy were all demonstrated in the 14 speeches of the president.

Tella, Suraya, Bonsu, and Anani-Bossman, (2020) did a study on crisis communication and Ghana's financial sector using qualitative approach. The study employed in-depth interviews and identified and analysed eight public relations consultants on how PR practitioners save the country from a brink of disaster few years ago. The study found that combination of reactive/proactive and leadership communication approaches were used to manage crisis in the financial sector. Also findings shows that practitioners had the requisite knowledge and training in dealing with crisis. The study recommended that financial sectors should allow PR practitioners to operate wholly so that crisis communication can produce the desired effect. The study concluded that, PR practitioners should be made part of top

management and equip them with the needed support to escalate crisis in the financial sector rather than lessen it.

Thompson (2020) did a research on risk communication in a double public health crisis: the case of Ebola and Cholera in Ghana. The study used in-depth interview and focused group discussion with risk communicators, media workers, and community members to argue that the differing individual and social experiences of Ebola and Cholera in Ghana were shaped by historical, religious, socio-cultural and institutional processing of risk signals which guided judgement about risks. It was found that health crisis' treatments and preventions are amplified and attenuated on risk signals. The study recommended that there should be inclusion of lay people perspectives in the development of risk and crisis communication campaigns.

A study conducted by Ahiafor (2019), was on strategies for mitigating the effects of crisis in Microfinance institutions in Ghana. The study employed mixed method and multiple case study which was composed of owner-managers from 6 microfinance companies and 6 consultants who overcame the microfinance crisis and remained practiced. The study found that good governance, communication, fundraising, cost reduction and business model strategies helped owner-managers to overcome the microfinance crisis. It concluded that business leaders, owner-managers, board of directors PR Practitioners and regulatory bodies should develop strategies to help their institutions to survive crises.

Atawura (2019) did a study on internal crisis communication strategies in the banking sector of Ghana. The study employed qualitative approach, using case study, interviews and documents analysis were used to draw findings from data gathered. The findings were that staff of the banks picked cues about crisis from both internal

and external sources to address crisis. Also, face-to-face, intranet, social media platforms, electronic mails and durbars were used to communicate with stakeholders. The study concluded that internal communication were poorly handled and that mismanagement, politics, played a key role in the collapse of the banks.

To analyse the amount and types of information that Ghana Atomic Energy Commission (GAEC) workers get, Sarfo (2015) performed an internal communication audit, relating that data to job performance, communication quality, as well as preferred methods of communication. As part of the research, semi-structured interviews with management and employee questionnaires were conducted in order to better understand how management and staff evaluate communication efficacy. The study found that workers were unhappy with the quantity of information they received. Computer-mediated communication channels that emphasised interaction were also needed by employees.

Sekyere, Boakye, Osei-Wusu, and Akyim-Gyasi, (2015) did a study on the assessment of crisis readiness of selected rural banks in Ashanti region. Qualitative method and interview were adopted through purposive sampling of twenty (20) respondents. The study found that although the rural banks have documented measures in place to deal with crisis, lower level employees were not aware of such documents while some middle level employees were did not know what entails in the documented measures although they were aware the existence measures. The study recommended that the rural banks must accept the reality that fire outbreaks, embezzlement and armed robbery are major potential crises that can seriously affect their operations. For this reasons they must make their premises easily accessible to security and emergency service providers. The study concluded that rural banks must

as a matter of necessity put in place crisis communication team and structures to effectively handle all communication with stakeholders in times of crisis.

Abaidoo (2011) focused on the internal communication satisfaction ratings of workers at the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) headquarters in Accra. The study was about channels of communication satisfaction, and communication structure. Despite using a quantitative approach, she utilized systems theory to understand how the many departments and components of SSNIT operate together to function as a whole. Her investigations indicated that SSNIT had internal communications. However, the employees were dissatisfied with the communication since SSNIT used a one-way communication channel, from management to subordinates. The organisation's unidirectional communication style made it impossible to share meaning.

Nikoi (2016) examined how the media sector conducts internal communications. He used a case study to gain an understanding of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation's activities (GBC). He used the interactive communication model and the notion of media richness to the communication process. Despite the mixed method technique used in his study, no hypotheses were created or tested for the quantitative component of the work. The investigation discovered that the GBC's internal communication was ineffective. Similar to Abaidoo (2011)'s findings, GBC relied on a one-way information flow. Employees expressed dissatisfaction with the 'lean' communication channels used by the GBC, such as memos and the GBC newsletter. Employees sought 'rich' channels of internal communication that were built for engagement.

## 2.6 Theoretical Framework

This research is guided by two theories namely: Situational Crisis Communication Theory developed by Coombs in 2007 and the Benoit Image Restoration Theory by William Benoit.

### 2.6.1 Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

Situational Crisis Communication theory (SCCT), according to Coombs (2007), projects people's reactions to the crisis response plan that is implemented. The theory focuses on how perceptions of a crisis situation affect crisis responses and the effects of responses to an organisation's reputation (Coombs, 2010). SCCT is an example of the systematic and social scientific study of crisis communication (Coombs, 2010).

According to Weiner (2016) this theory is evident when stakeholders attribute crisis responsibility to either the organisation itself or external factors, which in turn affects behaviours directed toward the organisation on behalf of the public. This relates to the way in which an organisation may evade responsibility in a crisis situation, as well as the perception that the public develops of the organisation based on the degree to which the organisation accepts responsibility (and how quickly it chooses to do so).

SCCT is “a systematic method for evaluating the reputational threat of a crisis and selecting crisis response and post-crisis response strategies designed to maximise the reputational protection of the response” (Coombs, 2010, p. 171).

SCCT describes factors that the public takes into consideration when forming their approval or disapproval of an organisation's social responsibility and management of a crisis. Lee, Nam, Hwang, and Sung, (2012) explains that the initial step is determining crisis type, as well as level of attributions of crisis responsibility and threat posed by a

crisis. These three types include: victim (low crisis responsibility/threat), accident (minimal crisis responsibility/threat), and intentional (strong crisis responsibility/threat).

SCCT also explains the role that behavioural intentions and moods/emotions play in crisis outcomes and public perception of an organisation's crisis management efforts. A concept that emerges regarding behaviour, intentions or word-of-mouth is negative. When the public is disappointed, angered, or does not support action, or lack of action, taken by an organisation during a crisis, individuals begin disseminating bad information about a failing organisation, which further harms the organisation's reputation (Coombs, 2010).

According to Johansen and Frandsen (2007) situational crisis communication theory is based on the fundamental idea that the organisation in a crisis situation selects crisis response strategy depending on the crisis type and stakeholders' attribution of responsibility to the organisation. By implication, the theory takes the crisis situation and context into consideration in order to find the most appropriate crisis communication strategy when it comes to protecting the organisation's image in the best way possible. By establishing a set of guidelines for the selection of crisis communication strategy, the organisation can respond more effectively on a crisis being more prepared (Heath & Millar, 2004). The crisis communication strategy is adjusted to the affected stakeholders more than it is adjusted to the organisation. The reason for this is probably that the public expect such a reaction from the organisation when it is attributed responsibility (Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

Similarly, utilising an apology to soothe tensions may not result in the same degree of reputation as implementing an efficient and successful information management plan



from the beginning. In most cases, adopting a strategy that does not preserve reputation is more costly than adopting a plan that increases reputational capital (Holloway, 2004). It has been shown and confirmed that the SCCT crisis response methods are successful in a variety of crisis scenarios over the course of many decades (Cooley, 2011; Kriyantono, 2012).

As previously reported, the General Motors bankruptcy crisis of 2008 was effectively addressed via discussions in accordance with the principles of the SCCT model, (Cooley and Cooley, 2011). On the same note, some of the SCCT techniques were effectively adapted and used in 2010 during the Gulf Coast oil disaster for image repair discourse that was broadcast on social media and elsewhere (Harlow, Brantley and Harlow, 2011). Organisations that use the SCCT model should use ethical communication methods in their operations. It would be unethical for such companies to begin crisis communication by concentrating only on reputational problems in the first place, without first taking into account the interests of stakeholders and relevant members of the public. In times of crisis, crisis managers should place a strong emphasis on the emotional and psychological concerns of those affected by the situation (Coombs, 2007). When it comes to reputational assets, they should be thought of as the advantages that result from a successful crisis communication plan.

In order to determine the best strategy for communicating crisis, crisis managers must assess the reputational threat of the crisis. According to Coombs (2007) SCCT, this is a two-step process. The first step is to determine the nature of the crisis. Also the theory posits that are three types:

Type 1. Victim Cluster (mild reputational threat, thus the company is an innocent victim). This type of crisis include:

- Natural disasters
- Rumours
- Workplace violence
- Product tempering

Type 2. Accidental Cluster (moderate reputational threat, the company is responsible for the crisis, but the actions leading up to it were unintentional). This type of crisis comprises:

- Challenges from stakeholders
- Mega-environmental-damage from an accident
- Technical breakdown accident
- Technical breakdown recalls

Type 3. Preventable Cluster (severe reputational threat, company knew it was placing stakeholders at risk and violated laws). This type includes:

- Human breakdown accidents
- Human breakdown recalls
- Organisational misdeed with no injuries
- Organisational misdeed with injuries
- Organisational misdeed management misconduct

The types vary in the amount of responsibility the stakeholders and the publics think the organisation holds in the crisis, thus whether the organisation has a history of such crisis. Looking at both the type of crisis and the history of crisis, crisis management team can determine the reputational threat. For instance, if a crisis has occurred frequently in an organisation, it poses serious damage to the reputation of the organisation. After ascertaining the reputational threat of the crisis, crisis managers

must choose an appropriate response strategy. SCCT offers three choices to crisis managers in responding to crisis. These choices include:

- Denial (say there is no crisis or you are not responsible)
- Diminish (trying to minimise or reduce the organisation's responsibility or the severity of the crisis)
- Rebuild (accepting and offering of apology and compensation where necessary).

Depending on the choice of strategy use to respond to crisis, SCCT added that, reinforce strategy is another strategy but cannot be used alone but rather can be used as a supplement to any of the three main choices posited in Coomb's SCCT.

### **2.6.2 Relevance of SCCT Theory to the Study**

The tenets of SCCT are applicable to this study since the study's focus was on crisis communication in an organisation. According to Grunig and Hunt (1984), communication management is the total planning, implementation, and assessment of an organisation's communication with both external and internal publics — groups that impact the organisation's capacity to accomplish its goals. The Situational Crisis Communication Theory was therefore appropriate for interpreting the issue communication plan or strategy used by the organisation under investigation since it sheds light on how the organisation saw the crisis, leading to their unique selected communication plan. While the work of theorists such as Lippmann, Lasswell, and Schramm in the early twentieth century provides a useful foundation for contemporary major emergency communication, the rhetorical-based, one-way, top-

down approach is shown to be deficient in many ways, and theories such as the SCCT are more relevant and applicable in recent communication strategy evaluation.

SCCT will enable the researcher to know the concept with various stages the nature of crisis and the response strategies employed by TPL which help them to overcome the 2013 crisis. The theory will aid the researcher to bring to bear the communication approaches that were used during and the aftermath of TPL's 2013 crisis. Also the researcher will be able to identify and ascertain the reality of unfolding of events and the rationale of such events on the reputation of TPL and their stakeholders.

Fink (1986) avers that all crises situation, whether they are unavoidable or just have the potential to develop into crisis, may pose some level of signs. SCCT will be useful to the study in ascertaining whether the crisis management team of TPL was able to identify signals that led to 2013 crisis and the measures used remedy the crisis situation. Also the tenets from SCCT will help the researcher to recommend good PR practices to the pharmaceutical industries to make them prepare adequately well since crises are inevitable.

## **2.7 Benoit's (1997) Image Restoration Theory**

William Benoit's image restoration theory is perhaps one of the most used and well-known models within the field of crisis communication. His model builds on rhetorical and sociological traditions (Johansen & Frandsen, 2007). Aristotle defined rhetoric as "the art of discovering all the available means of persuasion" even though rhetoric now also addresses more than persuasion (Foss, 2009; p. 23).

One primary aim of Benoit's (1997) image restoration theory is to rebuild and protect image (Jaques, 2014). If an organisation's image is threatened, the organisation can select an image restoration strategy. Benoit (1997) distinguishes between five strategies that can be applied to rebuild and protect an image in a crisis situation (Johansen & Frandsen, 2007).

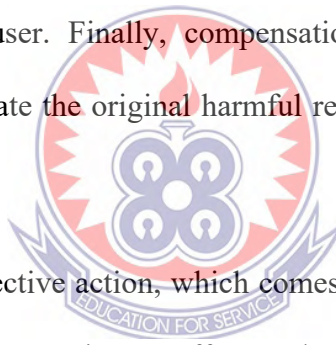
In the Image Restoration theory, Benoit (1997) uses five overall rhetorical responses functioning as image restoration strategies when an organisation's image is threatened. Benoit's (1997) first strategy is the denial strategy where the accused organisation denies that the offensive act has occurred, or that the organisation has any responsibility for the offensive act.

Benoit (1997) classified image restoration techniques into five categories: denial, avoidance of responsibility, reducing offensiveness, remedial action, and mortification. Denial may be classified into two types: shifting responsibility and plain denial. When a corporation engages in simple denial, it claims that it did not do the alleged conduct. Shifting responsibility happens when an organisation argues that an outside individual either conducted or caused the act to occur (Benoit & McHale, 1999).

Provocation, defeasibility, accident, and good purpose are all examples of evasion of accountability (Benoit, 1997). When an organisation claims that their conduct occurred in response to another objectionable act, this is referred to as provocation. Defeasibility happens when a person inside the organisation argues that they were not provided enough knowledge or that they were unable to control the circumstances created by the conduct. Accidents are defined as mistakes that occurred accidentally and were unmanageable by the organisation. Finally, mistakes done with good

intentions imply that the organisation should be held less responsible for the harms because they were not intended to occur (Benoit & McHale, 1999).

Reduce offensiveness is the third key technique of image repair discourse, and it is classified into six broad categories. In an attempt to disperse unfavourable sentiments, bolstering is utilized to enhance the quantity of good feelings the audience has towards the organisation. Minimisation happens when the accused person seeks to lessen the perceived consequences of the crime. The conduct is distinguished from other similar but more offensive acts by differentiation. Transcendence is an attempt to reframe the event in a more favorable light in order to improve the enactor's image. When an organisation provokes an assault on the accuser's credibility, this is referred to as attacking the accuser. Finally, compensation compensates a victim of the conduct in order to mitigate the original harmful repercussions of the action (Benoit, 1997).



The fourth option is corrective action, which comes in two varieties. An organisation may offer to repair the harm, or it may offer to take minor measures to prevent the act from occurring again in the future. Both of these kinds can occur simultaneously or independently. The final tactic is mortification. Mortification happens when the accused admits to the act, apologizes, and begs forgiveness. This technique can have both beneficial and bad effects on the company. It is feasible for the audience to accept their apologies and move ahead in a good manner. An apology, on the other hand, might create a channel for litigation against the organisation. The fundamental foundation for an examination of Toyota's image restoration approach in crisis communication was the five categories of image repair discourse (Myers, 2011). It is important to note the large body of research that has been conducted using Benoit's

(1995) image restoration strategies to research crisis events that reference Tylenol (Benoit & Lindsey, 1987), AT&T, Inc. (Benoit & Brinson, 1994), Hugh Grant (Benoit, 1997), US Airways, Inc. (Benoit & Czerwinski, 1997), and Texaco, Inc. (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000). Cowden and Sellnow (2002) Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer (1998) describe an organisational crisis as “a particular, unexpected, and non-routine occurrence or sequence of events that produce high levels of uncertainty and threaten or are seen to endanger an organisation's top-priority goals” (p. 194). According to the phrase, crises eventually threaten to undermine an organisation's public credibility. The NWA study's findings revealed the rhetorical approach behind their advertising efforts and image repair (Cowden & Sellnow, 2002). As the campaign's first phase, remedial action was taken. Second, in the case of a strike, passengers were compensated. Simple denial was then used to refute the pilots' accusations that NWA did not sufficiently compensate them for their profession. Shifting the blame was the next tactic used to deflect public outrage over the strike, stating that it was the pilots' responsibility for refusing to talk prior to implementing the strike. The concept of provocation was also used to argue that the pilots, rather than the NWA as a whole, were to blame for the problems advertising campaign.

### **2.7.1 Relevance of Benoit (1997) Image Restoration Theory to the Study**

Benoit's (1997) prescribes to organisations how to go about restoring their image after a crisis hits them. This theory is used in conjunction with the SCCT; as the SCCT theory helps the researcher in analysing the perception of stakeholders of Tobinco in a crisis, the Image Restoration Theory helps provide best practices on how image should be repaired in a crisis. This affords the researcher the opportunity to juxtapose Tobinco's communication strategies against best practices in the industry. Benoit's

(1997) Image Restoration Theory was chosen out of the many prescriptive theories on image handling because it is the most used theory in research when it comes to Image Restoration (Cooper, 2015).

While the models provided are beneficial in giving structure to the process of public relations or corporate communications prior to, during, and after a crisis, they present a conventional, linear perspective of crisis management. These models indicate that successful crisis management requires the establishment of all necessary structures, such as a crisis plan and an orderly sequence of actions. While the organisation is ostensibly operating normally, the crisis plan enables efficient contact with stakeholders, including the media. Once the crisis has passed, the organisation must communicate with the goal of re-establishing its image and adopt a business-as-usual approach in order to guarantee that the organisation's reputation is restored to its pre-crisis level. The crisis plan is reviewed and any adjustments required are made in advance of the next catastrophe. If the crisis team is successful, according to these methods, it reduces the likelihood of a crisis occurring and ensures that if one does, it is handled promptly and effectively.

While these methods to crisis management may be successful in linear systems where crises can be managed and anticipated, they may not be suitable in complex, dynamic systems (Bloom et al., 2002), which are often used to describe crisis situations. Additionally, these methods presuppose asymmetrical rather than symmetrical two-way communication, which is the choice of contemporary public relations experts such as Grunig (2000). By failing to place a sufficient emphasis on the actual content of crisis communications, these models cannot make the assumption that a recovery stage will inevitably follow the crisis.



By failing to communicate effectively during a crisis, an organisation may encounter another crisis inside a crisis or may never fully recover from the crisis or from unfavourable views about its management of the issue. Crises are often associated with negative connotations in models that tend toward the conventional linear approach - as occurrences that must be managed in order to restore the organisation to its previous status quo, thus Benoit Image Restoration Theory will help the searcher to ascertain measures adopted by pharmaceutical industries during crisis to restore their image.

## **2.8 Chapter Summary**

In reviewing of the literature, it was evident that crisis is an inevitable unexpected event that can affect individuals or organisations, may cause financial and reputational damage, or can threaten stakeholder relations. Nonetheless, how organisation takes steps to mitigate a crisis situation can go a long way mitigate a possible loss of reputation or the organisation itself. Thus, what an organisation does and says after a crisis has hit, is vital process in lessening the perils of the crisis situation. The study also discussed situational crisis communication theory and Benoit's image restoration theory to highlight the crisis response strategies employed by Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited and how Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited communicated these response strategies.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the methodological procedures used in the collection and analysis of data for this study. It focuses on the research approach, the research design, sampling techniques, and data analysis techniques employed in the study.

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

To understand wholly the meanings of the type of crisis faced by TPL as well as the crisis response strategies employed by same, this study adopts the qualitative research approach. For this study, a qualitative approach was used because it gives tools for analysing the meanings that a group of individuals attribute to social behaviours within a certain historical or cultural context (Creswell, 2014).

In qualitative research, the researcher's goal is to unveil the facts without interfering or manipulating the natural setting of the phenomenon of interest (Patton & Cochran, 2007). Lindlof and Taylor (2002) also acknowledge that qualitative research is concerned with analysing the situated form, content and lived experiences of social actors in words without subjecting them to mathematical or formal transformations.

Since the purpose of this research is to provide an in-depth knowledge of the methods employed by TPL and the nature of the crisis they face, a qualitative approach was chosen because it provides tools to assist the researcher in gaining a better understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

## 3.2 Research Design

A research design is the strategy, plan and structure that characterises a research work. It is the logic that links the data to be collected and the answers to be given to the research questions (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2009). The research design involves setting the conditions for collecting and analysing data relevant to the researcher and the phenomenon of interest (Yin, 2009). This study employed case study as the research design on the basis that it provides the strategy, plan and structure that characterizes this research work. The study also adopted case study because it served as the logical link that connects the data to be collected and the conclusions to be drawn to the research questions.

### 3.2.1 Case Study

Case study design is used when a researcher wants to probe deeper into a phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Generally, the research questions tend to determine the research design appropriate for the study. To Yin (2009), a case study becomes relevant as a research design when a researcher's research questions are tailored in a way that would explain a present occurrence (for instance, "how" and "why" a certain phenomenon works). A researcher uses a case study research strategy, according to Creswell (2013), to examine a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or several bounded systems (cases) across time, collecting data from different sources and reporting a case description and case themes as a result.

Per the above authors' explication, I adopted the case study design for the study because first, it affords this study the appropriate scientific justification to thoroughly investigate the type of crises faced by TPL as well as the crisis response strategies employed by TPL. Adapting Creswell's (2013) definition to suit my study, the

researcher explored a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) in the form of a real-life crisis situation experienced at TPL over the period under review. Again, this study adopted a detailed in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information by way of interviews and document analysis. The findings were later categorised and reported in a thematic presentation.

### **3.3. Sampling**

Purposive or purposeful (Daymon & Holloway, 2011) is applied for the study. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) note that no qualitative researcher can capture every event as it unfolds, thus the purposeful selection of data sites for a particular study. The two scholars further acknowledge that the right choice of a sampling strategy enables researchers to make a systematic contact with communicative phenomena with a minimum of wasted effort.

In line with the above assertions, the crisis situation that occurred at TPL in 2013 was purposively selected to gain rich, in-depth understanding of the type of crises faced by TPL, the crisis response strategies employed by TPL and how those crisis response strategies were communicated.

Also qualitative sampling is primarily made up of small sampling units studied in-depth (Bryman, 2012). Daymon and Holloway (2011) also note that the appropriate number of participants for qualitative studies depends mainly on the type of research questions, the resources available to the researcher as well as even the resources available for the study. Berg (2004) adds that participants for a study ought to be chosen based on their experiences and knowledge of the issue under investigation

In line with above assertions, the participants for this study were chosen based on their experiences and knowledge of the issue under investigation as indicated by Berg (2004). TPL is a leading brand pharmaceutical companies in Ghana (GPA, 2017). Overall, the six participants purposively sampled (including; the General Manager, Communication Director, Human Resource Manager, Accountant and two other staff members from the communication Department) from TPL were selected on the basis of their lived experiences on the crisis situation that unfolded in 2013 at TPL. The General Manager is the head of the organisation, hence, superintends over all activities at TPL. The Communication Director at TPL is directly involved with all communications with regards to TPL and so are the two other staff members of the department included in the study. The Human Resource Manager is also in charge of employee relations; therefore, it is the Human Resource Manager's duty to ensure that the needs of the employees are met as internal stakeholders. The Accountant has oversight responsibility over the finances of the organisation. Thus, the Accountant is in the position to provide information on how the financial standing of TPL fared during the crisis period.

### **3.4 Data Collection Methods**

In this study, the researcher utilised interview and document analysis. To enable the researcher to gather the needed data for the study, all the communicative activities on crisis response strategies were keenly recorded through interviews and document analysis of TPL's 2013 crisis.

### 3.4.1 Interviews

Interview guides (see Appendix A) were carefully designed to assist the researcher in the collection of data from six participants as they tell their own stories on the 2013 crisis of TPL from their own point of view.

The researcher employed one-on-one interview sessions with participants at their offices; offices are one of the places where participants feel free to assertively articulate and interpret their experiences on the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2014).

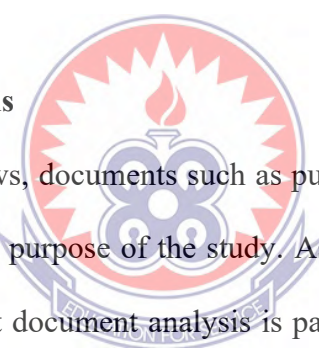
Brennen (2017), defined interview as a purposefully focused conversation between an interviewer and an interviewee with the aim of unravelling participants' perspectives, opinions, and important aspects of their lived experiences. The interviews in this research involved unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants.

At the onset, the researcher requested and secured an introductory letter from the Department of Communication and Media Studies of the University of Education, Winneba, where the researcher is a student. The introductory letters were personally delivered to the front office of TPL. Within two weeks, each of the participants called to communicate the interview date and time with the researcher. Prior to the scheduled day for the interviews, the researcher had formulated a semi-structured interview guide.

On the scheduled day, I met each participant in their various offices. I introduced myself and offered a brief narrative about what the whole study was about. I also made it known to the participants that they have the right to decline questions they are uncomfortable with or stop the discussion. I appealed to each participant to feel free

to share their views. Again, I asked for their permission to record the discussion with my mobile phone. Once the interview started, I used my semi-structured interview guide to moderate the discussion to prevent participants from straying away from the boundaries of the discussion. Overall, I interviewed the six participants. They included the General Manager, Communication Director, Human Resource Manager, Accountant and two other staff members from the communications directorate of TPL. The interviews lasted between thirty to thirty-five minutes. I also wrote down notes in my notepad as the discussion and interviews were ongoing. Overall, the discussion and interviews were conducted in a cordial and relaxing setting. Therefore, participants had the opportunity to express themselves fully.

### **3.4.2 Document Analysis**



In addition to the interviews, documents such as publications and press releases were critically examined for the purpose of the study. As a research method, Daymon and Holloway (2011) state that document analysis is particularly applicable to qualitative case studies aiming to produce a detailed description. After the interview sessions some participants gave the researcher documents that consisted of the official press releases of TPL as well as some internal notices that were used during the crisis period. The documents such as newspaper publications (see **Appendices 1,2,&3**) were added to provide information which may not have been provided during the interview sessions or may contain information that placed more emphasis on the information collected during the interview session. Thus, Daymon and Holloway (2011) assert that documents can be a rich base of comprehensive primary or supplementary data than interviews conducted over a short time period.

### 3.5 Data Analysis Method

Frankel and Wallen (2003) argue that data analysis is that task which involves synthesising all the information a researcher gathers in the field and drawing parallel and logical lines in the data according to the researcher's set of research questions. Creswell (2014) also corroborated these claims when he argue that a good data analysis involves the researcher making sense of the data collected.

In this research, the analytical strategy employed was Thematic Analysis. According to Smith and Firth (2011), thematic Analysis can be described as an “interpretive process, where data is systematically searched to identify patterns within the data in order to provide an illuminating description of the phenomenon” What this means is that the researcher in employing thematic analysis as a technique identified common patterns, codes or themes that reoccurred and offered detailed description of the codes.



For the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed into text so as to make the identification of themes and codes easier. The researcher then read through the transcribed text thoroughly and took note of key issues raised by the participants. Reoccurring themes and patterns were identified across the responses from the interview participants and coded. These processes of identifying and analysing themes are consistent with the analytical steps employed by Bosumtwi (2015) who also conducted interviews with selected members of staff from Electricity Company of Ghana Limited to examine their perceptions on the channels used in communicating crisis –related information.

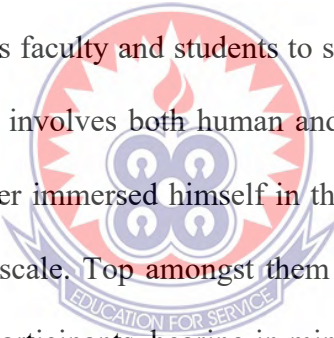
The researcher equally initiated the data analysis process for the documents by reading through the said documents eight times in all, moving back and forth through



the pages in order to familiarize myself with the details and to gain an appreciation of the messages embedded in them.

During the interpretative process, I looked out for issues that were raised both during the interviews as well as the documents and how these issues related to one another; meanings were then drawn with the aid of the theories underpinning this study. Excerpts from the interviews and the documents were also used to support the analysis and discussions.

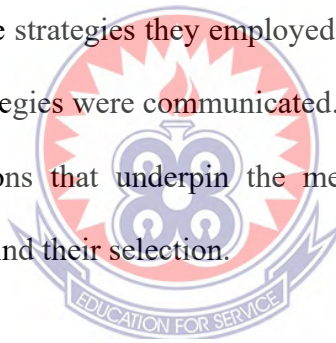
### **3.6 Ethical Issues**

There are standard research ethical codes that are prescribed by the University of Education, Winneba for its faculty and students to strictly adhere to when conducting any form of research that involves both human and non-human subjects as research participants. The researcher immersed himself in the ethical dictates so as to be able to apply them to the full scale.  Top amongst them is that researchers must seek the consent of their research participants, bearing in mind that they have the right to agree or decline to participate in any research (Bowen, 2009).

The researcher in adhering to this, sought the permission of the participants through a written letter that detailed the nuances of the research. The letter subsequently received a response granting the participants' consent. These were in line with the ethical postulations of Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2015) who proposed that for researchers to be ethical in their research process, they ought to adhere to three basic principles – informed consent, participants' privacy, and debriefing. Aside the fact that the interviewees were duly briefed on all facets of the research so that they have

full information to decide on whether they want to participate or not, they were also assured of maximum anonymity.

Vanclay, Baines and Taylor (2013) also note that a research study must fully disclose all the methods and analytical procedures used for the study to enable replication of the research by another researcher; enable peer review of the adequacy and ethicality of the methodology; and to encourage critical self-reflection on the limitations of the methodology and any implications for the results and conclusions. In view of this ethical principle, this research work fully outlines all the various procedures through which the data collection were done and applied. It chronicles in full, the methods and procedures used in the collection and analysis of the data on the type of crisis faced by TPL, the various response strategies they employed to communicate the crisis as well as, how the response strategies were communicated. Similarly, the study discusses the principles and assumptions that underpin the methods and procedures and most notably, the rationale behind their selection.



### **3.7 Trustworthiness**

Qualitative research involves the researcher taking an active role in the gathering and interpretation of respondent's perspectives and making meaning, the onus lies on the researcher to present a good and trustworthy study. It is likely that the researcher might impose his or her own assumptions on the data, however, Stake (1995) suggests that researchers learn to understand their research and not try to impress on it.

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might impose his or her own assumptions on the data, however Stake (1995) suggests that researchers learn to understand their research and not try to impress on it. In order to gain trustworthiness of the findings, the researcher employed strategies two strategies commended by some qualitative authorities. I triangulated by using multiple sources of data to corroborate the emerging findings (Yin, 2013). In this study, I utilised interviews, observations and reviewed documents.

Furthermore, Yin (2013) is of the view that for a case study to be significant and complete, one must utilise alternative perspectives and enough evidences.

Lincoln and Guba (2000) argue that ensuring credibility is one of most important factors in establishing trustworthiness in a research work. Creswell (2014) provides eight validation strategies in testing for the validity in a qualitative research. These processes include triangulation, using member-checking to determine accuracy on the part of participants, using rich and thick descriptions, presenting negative case analysis, spending prolonged time at the research field, using peer debriefing, using external auditors and bracketing of biases. He further states that qualitative researchers should adopt at least two of these strategies in their studies; this research work applied three of these strategies. The researcher bracketed his biases by distancing myself from previously held assumptions or prejudices and basing interpretations solely on immediate insight into the phenomena themselves as recommended by Bertelsen (2005). In addition, in answering the research questions, the researcher adopted rich and thick descriptions to describe the findings in order to paint a vivid and thorough picture of the type of crisis faced by TPL, the various response strategies they employed to communicate the crisis and how the response strategies were communicated.

Finally, this research work equally adopted triangulation as a validation strategy. Triangulation according to Creswell (2013) is the use of different or multiple sources of information, or theories or even methodologies in the research process for purposes of corroboration or augmentation to solidify a finding or a perspective. This research employed both document analysis and interviews as data collection techniques. After gathering data on the crisis situation on TPL with interviews which were conducted with the participants, the researcher augmented the findings with documents provided by the participants. This was meant to provide further insights into the elements under study.

### **3.8 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the process of the research and the method of data analysis. Firstly, it highlighted the approach of research used and the design suitable for the study. It also shed light on the sampling method. Finally, it discussed the method of data collection and analysis in detail and wrapped up with the ethical considerations.

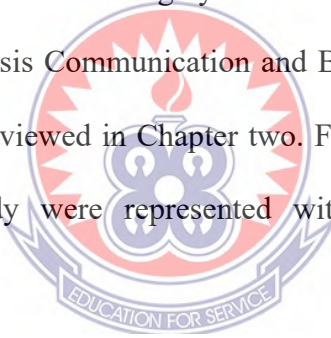
## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents of the findings from the data collected through interviews and document analysis from Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited (TPL). The chapter presents findings on data collected from six participants to identify the type of crisis faced by TPL, response strategies employed by TPL to communicate the crisis and how the response strategies were communicated.

For easy analysis and interpretation, the data derived were simplified into several thematic units. Each theme was thoroughly described and critically analysed using the theories of Situational Crisis Communication and Benoit's Image Restoration theory as well as the literature reviewed in Chapter two. For anonymity and confidentiality, participants for the study were represented with alphanumeric codes such as (Participant 1).



#### 4.1 RQ1. What nature of crises were faced by Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited in 2013?

This research question therefore sought to identify and examine the nature of crisis faced by TPL. A thorough coding of the data collected through interviewing six participants including: The General Manager, Communication Director, Human Resource Manager, Accountant and two other staff from TPL and analysing all the relevant document on the subject indicated that the crisis faced by TPL was weaved around *organisational crisis, financial crisis and natural crisis*. Using the Situational

Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) these themes were critically analysed to explain the nature of crisis faced by TPL.

#### **4.1.1 Organisational Crisis**

On the crisis faced by Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited (TPL) in 2013 the company was accused by Food and Drugs Board (FDA) of supplying unapproved drugs to their customers. The FDA seized and destroyed large consignments of unregistered drugs from TPL and imposed GH¢40,000 fine on TPL in addition to locking up all warehouses belonging to TPL. The theme of organisational crisis denotes all activities or series of unplanned events that had adverse effect on TPL's line of operations. The indicators of this particular theme are quotes from participants indicating employee frustrations, disappointments and insecurities about the way the crisis situation impacted their jobs and lives. The data obtained from interactions with the staff and management of TPL for this study uncovered that one of the crises TPL faced as a result of the FDA's ban and seizure of large consignments of drugs from TPL was organisational crisis. Organisational crisis highlights the unexpected, and non-routine events or series of events that created high levels of uncertainty and threat or perceived threat to TPL's legitimacy and survival. This dovetails into the assertion made by Mitroff (2004) who averred that organisational crisis challenges and upsets an organisation's basic assumptions and threatens its very survival.

Also, given that organisational crisis has negative consequences and triggers circumstances where opportunities to engage coping strategies may be distant and thus, threatening organisational legitimacy and performance (Mitroff, 2004). TPL's conflict with FDA troubled the organisation's performance and threatened its

legitimacy. Throughout the interviews, the participants emphasised how FDA's decision to put the spotlight on TPL interrupted the organisation's operations and diverted priority attention to that situation. One of the participants revealed during an interview session that:

*"...FDA's accusations about this company (TPL) concerning unregistered and expired pharmaceutical products took a great toll on us...it affected everything here...some works were halted and some of us feared it was even going to affect our jobs..."*

- (Participant 3)

Another participant also corroborated this by acknowledging that:

*...we were disappointed that FDA tried to make a scapegoat out of us....they did not factor in the livelihoods that were going to be affected as a result of closing our warehouses and banning us...lots of workers were affected here...these workers have families...and depended on this company for their family's survival...if this company had gone down all of these workers would have been badly affected too...*

- (Participant 1)

The above assertions support the claims made by scholars like Mitroff (2004) as well as Massey and Larson (2006) that organisational crisis do not only threaten the survival of the organisation in question but it also has cascading effects on individuals or employees. Massey and Larson (2006) asserts that anytime the survival of an organisation is threatened, the effect of crisis is more intense on external satisfaction (wages, working conditions, working security) rather than on internal satisfaction (opportunities for further education, career evolution, creativity, independent action).

In both cases crisis leads to decrease in job satisfaction and maximise job stress (Massey & Larson, 2006). Mitroff (2004) also explains that often than not organisational crisis situations interrupt work flow and can agitate, question and change the occurring economic and social conditions of stakeholders especially employees. In addition, it could affect legitimacy of company and their products and/or services, as well as negative impact even the employees psychologically.

In line with above explications, particularly with the position by Mitroff (2004), it became evident that some participants for this study acknowledged going through some psychological stress as a result of the FDA's accusations coupled with the media tag of war between TPL and the FDA. The participants indicated that they had to deal with the anxiety of not knowing when the situation was going to return to normalcy. That notwithstanding, it was equally distressing when they had to be engaged in explaining and among other things, re-explaining the situation at work to friends and family. One of the participants who had experienced some form of psychological trauma as a result of TPL's crisis, pointed out that:

*...this situation didn't help at all...there was no peace of mind...my friends...were calling and asking all the time...when I get home too, another wahala (trouble)...my wife and kids will be expecting some good news...which I didn't have...*

- (Participant 4)

Another participant also expressed similar worries. In his case, he indicated that:

*...I had to turn off my phones sometimes...everybody wanted to ask about what was going on...it's one thing worried about your job and what is going to happen next and another thing being bothered by people to provide answers to*



*questions you don't have all the answers...and when you tell them you don't know, they look at you somehow...*

- (Participant 2)

This admission of frustrations, disappointments and insecurities by the participants of this study about the way the crisis situation impacted their jobs and their very lives is in line with the situational crisis communication theory which explains socio-psychological processes stakeholders go through during a crisis situation (Coombs, 2010). According to Combs (2010), during a crisis situation just as the one that ensued at TPL, stakeholders like employees attempt to make sense of events, especially why they occurred. The situational crisis communication theory however explains how people attribute responsibility based on limited evidence, tending to attach blame to a specific person involved in an event (internal) or to environmental factors (external) (Coombs, 2010). In the case of the TPL, the employees attempted to make sense of the crisis events, attribute responsibility (not only to the cause of the crisis but also the effects the situation had on their livelihood) to limited evidence and pinning the blame on external factors which was FDA in this case.

Weiner (2016) corroborates this by acceding that, during crises, this theory is evident when stakeholders attribute crisis responsibility upon either the organisation itself or external factors, which in turn affects behaviours directed toward the organisation on behalf of the public. This relates to the way in which an organisation may evade responsibility in a crisis situation, as well as the perception the public develops of the organisation based on the degree to which the organisation accepts responsibility (and how quickly it chooses to do so). In line with Weiner's (2016) assertion, it is evident that the participants for this study attributed crisis responsibility to the FDA's actions

against TPL and as such that influenced their behaviours directed towards TPL on behalf of the public along with their behaviours directed towards the public on behalf of TPL.

#### **4.1.2 Financial Crisis**

Financial crisis was another nature of crisis TPL faced as a result of the FDA's ban and seizure of large consignments of drugs from TPL. The theme of financial crisis primarily points to loss of money or revenue and the main indicators for this theme were low sales as a result of significant drop in the demand for the pharmaceutical products from TPL. It was apparent from the data that the FDA's confiscation of unregistered drugs from TPL, coupled with a GH¢40,000 fine on TPL as well as locked up warehouses belonging to TPL, had a financial toll on the day-to-day operations of TPL. Business like TPL run on money and so finance is critical in just about every business decision, from planning and budgeting and cash flow management to the capital structure and control risks and costs (Canel & Sanders, 2010). It is therefore not surprising that finances are the backbone and propeller of business manoeuvres, and companies would be stagnant without that cash flow (Falkenheimer & Heide, 2006). TPL's turmoil with FDA affected their cash flow. Their consignments of drugs had been impounded, their factories and warehouses had been locked up, the FDA was also demanding a whopping sum total of GH¢40,000 and to cap it all up, the situation had been dragged to the media front and TPL was constantly in the news for the wrong reasons. The participants for the study expressed how much this affected the financial position of TPL.

The data from the interactions with the participants indicated that at some point during the turmoil there were rumours from the grapevine of a possible bankruptcy or redundancy and that was going to affect salaries. The management of TPL had to meet the staff on two separate occasions to clear that rumour that there was neither going to be bankruptcy or redundancy and that salaries would not be affected. One of the participants actually revealed that:

*“...I wasn’t the only one who heard about the fact that some people were going to be laid off...everybody wanted to know what was going on and what was going to happen...and so the meetings with management really calmed things down a bit...”*

- (Participant 5)

Another participant also expressed similar concerns along the same lines. He said that:

*“...we heard that there was no money...and that the case had affected us...a friend of mine even told me some of us were going to be sacked...nobody knew how soon the bosses were going to announce the list of those people who would be affected...so when we eventually met to discuss these issues with our authorities it was confirmed that our money situation wasn’t good...but no one was going to be sacked...I was relieved...”*

- (Participant 6)

A significant part of these rumours concerning a possible bankruptcy or redundancy or salary hit was based on the situation TPL were facing with regards to low revenue inflow. Apart from the fact that the FDA had seized lots of their pharmaceutical products and their factories and warehouses had been locked up, sales for their

products already on the market had gone considerably low. During the interview sessions, one of the participants had attributed the low sales to the negative media reports on TPL at the time. He emphasized that:

*“...who will buy your stuff when journalists are saying your products are bad? Nobody will.... the journalists were saying all manner of things about us and people didn't want to buy from us again...”*

- (Participant 3)

Financial crisis as argued by Falkenheimer and Heide (2006) creates a sudden and often unintended disturbance in the financial structure of an organisation. According to Falkenheimer and Heide (2006), such disturbances are likely associated typically with falling asset prices and insolvency amongst debtors and intermediaries, which ramifies through the financial system, disrupting the organisation's capacity to allocate capital. This situation explained by Falkenheimer and Heide (2006), was very comparable to the situation expressed by the participants as the state of affairs at TPL at the time. In an interview with one of the participants who happened to be part of management of TPL, he held the opinion that:

*“...it is no secret that the FDA situation affected us financially...our goods were seized, our factories were not functioning, no one could use the warehouses and our customers weren't also buying...as a company, our capital capacity was in crisis...we had pull every financial string we knew to keep afloat...”*

- (Participant 1)

In relation to the above illustrations and explanations of the situational crisis communication theory, it goes without saying that one of the notions this theory

encapsulates especially when examining crisis situations is how organisations in handling crisis often turn to attribute the crisis responsibility to external factors (Coombs, 2010). In this case, it is clear that TPL attributed the crisis responsibility of their financial predicament at that time to the actions of the FDA. The participants from TPL repeatedly look at the cause of the problem from an external factor perspective. It was either as a result of the FDA's adversary position against them or the media's undesirable reportage of the events. According to the proponents of the situational crisis communication theory like Coombs (2010) and Weiner (2016), anytime an organisation evades responsibility in a crisis situation, it turns to skew public perception and behaviour away from the organisation from being the cause of the problem to rather an external factor. This according to Weiner (2016) is to help couch public consideration and support, thus regaining public trust in times of crisis.

#### **4.1.3 Natural Crisis**

The data revealed that the organisation preferred to defer the cause of certain crisis to an external factor as they realise it helps them gain sympathy from their audience as opposed to pointing to an internal cause as that makes them seem unprepared. For example, there are more than few instances where crisis, even when natural could be averted if organisations put in place issues monitoring strategies to identify causes such as choked gutters in the case of floods and faulty wiring in the case of fires.

The theme of natural crisis highlights circumstances that disturbs the environment and are generally beyond the control of human beings. This then takes into cognisance, exigencies that are created as a direct result of a natural event such as floods. Aside the FDA's siege of TPL production sites and warehouses, the data collected also

indicated that TPL was rocked with a flooding incident which added up to their already ongoing strife and turbid circumstances with the FDA. TPL had its production sites and warehouses in Accra, the capital of Ghana and over a decade now, Accra had been notorious for its annual flooding incidents in major areas in the capital (Agyemang, 2018). Other causes of flooding in Accra aside the heavy downpours are as a result of the improper planning of settlement in Accra, choked gutters which block the drainage system and a few other human factors. The floods have resulted in heavy traffic on the roads in the cities of Accra as well as halting commercial activities in the markets, shops and factories which usually prevent workers from going to work (Agyemang, 2018). The participants disclosed that at the time the FDA grounded their production sites and warehouses, the rains also deepened their woes; portions of their offices and compound flooded due to a heavy rainfall. The ramifications of flood further halted the already limited commercial and administrative duties they were engaged in. One of the participants narrated the incident of the flooding at TPL.

He recounted that:

*“...it was a Wednesday morning...I had a call from the security at work who told me our offices had flooded...when I got to the premises I noticed that some of our properties were destroyed by the strong winds and blown off part of the roofing of our buildings. In fact the rains had gotten into the buildings as a result of the flood...we lost a lot that day...”*

- (Participant 1)

In an interview with some of the other participants, it was revealed that the rippling effect of the flood was that, for over week a lot of the operational and administrative duties had to be suspended while the artisans worked around the clock to repair and

restore the facilities back to full operation. The flood also came with some losses incurred. The losses ranged from repairing the ruined roofs to fixing the electrical connections as well as procuring new computers and other machines that had been damaged as result of the flood. For example, another participant attested to the above depositions by averring that:

*“...several days of work was lost as a result of the flooding which was beyond humanly control...some of the staff had to work from the compound...we needed to get additional funds to repair the damage and restore the broken equipment...”*

- (Participant 6)

Again, from above explications, one can argue that TPL viewed the cause of the crisis situation purely from an external factor perspective which is also in line with the position of the situational crisis communication theory as suggested by Coombs (2010) and Weiner (2016). In the view of Coombs (2010) and Weiner (2016), in the quest to maintain a sense of innocence in the eyes of the public, organisations that have been hit by crisis events often point to externally generated factors rather than internal ones as the cause of the crisis. Coombs (2010) explains further that organisations turn to take this path primarily due to the need to minimise the reputational threat of a crisis and to maximise the reputational protection benefits. It is also imperative to state that how an organisation like TPL views the causes of their woes is core and critical to the foundational definition of how they approach the management of that crisis (Sapriel, 2013). And so, not only did TPL attempt to maximize the reputational protection benefits by communicating that the cause of their woes was as a result of an external factor (i.e. FDA) but also TPL reveals in that

approach how they intend to manage that crisis which is from this stage, a rapid desire to cope and survive the crisis rather than necessarily averting the challenge.

Tun, Gehbauer, Senitz, Mueller & Marc (2007) addressed the five stages of natural disasters, which included the forecasting stage, the warning stage, the emergency relief phase, the rehabilitation and rebuilding phases, and the recovery and rebuilding phases. During the prediction phase, structural measures are implemented to limit the negative impact of natural disasters, environmental degradation, and technological hazards, and non-structural measures are implemented in advance to ensure effective response to the impact of hazards by establishing timely and effective early warnings as well as temporary evacuation that affect population (Tun et al., 2007). Based on the responses of the participants and the extent to which the floods affected them, it can be concluded that TPL did not execute any precautions for natural disasters during the forecast period, and as a result, they suffered severely. This assertion affirmed Bosomtwi (2015), which postulates that natural crises are beyond human control. In light of the fact that repeated flooding is expected in Accra and other regions of Ghana, any organisation that has implemented a natural disaster prediction phase would surely have addressed the effects of rains and floods on their organisation.

#### **4.2 RQ2. What were the response strategies employed by TPL to communicate the crisis?**

In view of the crisis faced by TPL in 2013, this question sought to explore the various response strategies employed by TPL to communicate the crisis. In responding to the question, three themes were appropriated from Coombs' (2010) view of the primary crisis response strategies organisations adopt in communicating crisis. These three themes are *the denial strategy*, *the diminish strategy* and *the rebuilding strategy*.



Using the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) and Coombs' (2010) key concepts on the crisis response strategies discussed in chapter two, these themes are critically examined to explain the crisis response strategies TPL used in communicating the crisis in 2013.

#### 4.2.1 Denial Strategy

The theme of denial strategy underscores TPL's attempt to deny or remove any connection with the crisis. It was evident from the data collected that TPL's initial responses towards the crisis situation that they faced in 2013 was that of renunciation; to reject any connection with the said crisis and to also attack the accuser which in this case was FDA. A press statements issued by the Chief Executive of FDA, Dr Stephen Opuni and copied to TPL as well as many media outlets in Ghana which were published by *Daily Graphic* on Tuesday October 1, 2013 and Friday October 4, 2013 said these fake and unregistered medicines had been supplied to regional medical stores, hospitals and pharmacies nationwide (see **Appendices 1&2**). According to the FDA, the medicines posed a serious threat to public health and safety since they had not been evaluated for their quality, safety and efficacy by the Authority. The FDA directed that those already distributed be immediately recalled countrywide in order to protect public health and safety. The FDA urged all in stock of the unapproved medicines from TPL to hand them over to the nearest FDA office for safe disposal.

TPL denied all the claims by FDA that they have been trading in substandard pharmaceutical products on the Ghanaian market, arguing that the FDA's claims were not based on any thorough clinical test to scientifically prove their assertions and that FDA's claim lacks empirical evidence. In an interview with one of the participants for

this study, he reinforced TPL's attempt to deny or remove any connection with the crisis and blaming it on the FDA. In the said interview, he pointed out that:

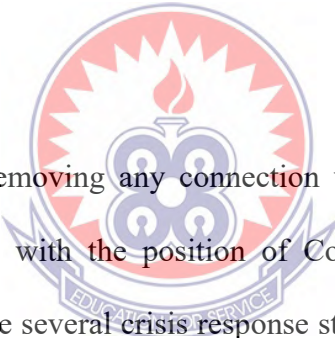
*"...It's pure witch-hunting case...The FDA did not bring any scientific proof on the assertions that it has made against us... it's totally null and void"*

- (Participant 1)

In another interview, one more participant corroborated the earlier position by stressing that:

*"...we (TPL) had done nothing wrong...absolutely nothing...it didn't even make sense... why did they only single us (TPL) out...it was clear we had done nothing wrong...it is probably a personal vendetta they have with this company..."*

- (Participant 3)



This act of denying or removing any connection with the crisis and attacking the accuser (FDA) is in line with the position of Coombs (2010) who suggests that organisations in crisis have several crisis response strategies to minimise the potential reputational damage they face. Amongst these strategies, crisis-responsibility denial is found to be a frequently used strategy by organisations in crisis, despite the fact that experimental research evaluated denial as the least effective strategy (Coombs, 2010). Other scholars have made similar allusions (Bradford & Garrett, 2016; Weiner, 2016). According to Weiner (2016) for example, during crises, it is evident that stakeholders attribute crisis responsibility either to the organisation or to external factors, which in turn affects behaviours directed toward the organisation on behalf of the public. More often than not, to evade responsibility in a crisis situation and avoid public criticism, many organisations' initial action is to attribute the crisis responsibility to external factors. In the case of TPL, this was apparent in their approach to remove themselves

from any connection with the crisis and rather pinning it on the FDA as indicated by Weiner (2016). This way, the organisation in question, uses well-coordinated repudiations of the crisis in an attempt to protect the reputation of the organisation (Weiner, 2016, p. 32).

#### **4.2.2 Diminish Strategy**

Diminish strategy as a theme for answering the question on the response strategies employed by TPL to communicate the crisis encapsulates attempts by TPL to water down the seriousness of the crisis. This can be seen in a lot of the actions and inactions of TPL to lower the connection between the organisation and the crisis and help the organisation's publics see the crisis in a less negative light. From the data collected, it was apparent that TPL used every means possible to lower their connection with the crisis, even to the extent of proceeding to court to sue the FDA and also applied for an interim injunction against the FDA to restrain them from going ahead in destroying products of the company until the final determination of the suit (see **Appendix 3**). In furtherance, TPL equally issued a press statement to media houses, chronicling their innocence. Also, in the said press release, TPL echoed that it had been engaging in pharmaceutical business in Ghana for the past 19 years during which period it had duly complied with all the laws especially the laws in relation to the importation of drugs into the country, more particularly the Public Health Act 2012, Act 851 section 97 to 101 (see **Appendix B**).

On the substance of why TPL went to court, one of the participants of this study mentioned that:

*"...we had to go to the court...The FDA was trying to bully us for no good reason...the courts were our only objective friend at that moment...we trust the law and the court system...we believed in proving our innocence in this matter and protecting the business..."*

- (Participant 6)

Also, another participant in an interview for this study likewise recounted why it was expedient for TPL to issue the press statement. According to him:

*"...we needed to tell our side of the story and to prove our innocence...The FDA was the first to start to take the issue to the media...we needed to respond in the same way...a lot of our customers...and sales had been affected by negative reportage, the press statement was the beginning of correcting the wrong notions to clarify any ambiguity..."*

- (Participant 2)

TPL's approach in minimising the seriousness of the crisis while lessening the organisation's responsibility for the crisis at the same time as enumerated above dovetails into the assertion made by Coombs (2010). Coombs (2010) averred that during crisis situations, one of the possible game plans an organisation can adopt is the diminish crisis response strategy which according to him aims at minimising the amount of responsibility placed on the organisation. This is achieved by offering excuses for or justifying the company's actions. In the case of TPL, this could be seen particularly in the press statement they released to the media recounting their over 19 years of engagement in pharmaceutical business in Ghana and how in all those years, they have been a law-abiding business. Other authors who have explained diminish crisis response strategies like Heath and Millar (2004) elucidate that the diminish

crisis response strategy should most frequently be used in response to victim crises where the company is not at fault for the issue. For smaller crises, this strategy can help businesses minimise the negative effects of the situation while still avoiding taking unnecessary fault. For example, a participant for this study in an interview mentioned that:

*"... the press statement was our way of telling our story...the public needed to know we were innocent of the claims...and that what is happening to us is unfair...our customers needed to know...we needed to at least try and mitigate some of the negative reportage about us.."*

- (Participant 3)

It will be noted that although diminish strategy can be used to reduce the organisation's responsibility in the crisis, it can also be used to reduce attribution of organisational control of the crisis (Coombs, 2010). From the afore-discussed, it appears the main aim of TPL in using the diminish strategy was to reduce responsibility only but not to reduce attribution of organisational control. In an attempt to reduce attribution of organisational control, an organisation will seek to present themselves as not responsible for the crisis but that they were victims of circumstances or procedure; in this case for instance, they could have pointed a finger at the exporters of the drug as those who sent them a faulty batch. Nevertheless, TPL preferred to reduce responsibility by watering it down through denial. This may be because TPL may not have identified any feasible way in which they could reduce their control of the situation without it backfiring.

### 4.2.3 Rebuild Strategy

The theme rebuild strategy encompasses TPL exertions in taking responsibility for the crisis and offering apologies. The primary indicator for this theme is perceptible in how TPL eventually admitted to importing and distributing fake anti-malaria drugs and apologised to the FDA for engaging in the act. The Executive Chairman of TPL and the Director of Bliss GVS Pharma, distributors of anti-malaria suppository, Gsunate Plus, were invited by the Bureau of National Investigations to assist the FDA in investigations over alleged importation of fake drugs. According the FDA, TPL had imported into Ghana a fake antimalarial medicine for children called Gsunate Plus, a suppository which is manufactured in India by Bliss GVS Pharma. In a press statement issued by FDA during the investigation, the Chairman of TPL, Mr. Samuel Tobbin and the Director of Bliss GVS Pharma, Mr S. N. Kamath admitted to importing and distributing fake anti-malaria drugs and apologised to the FDA for engaging in the act (see Appendices 1&3). Also according to the said statement issued by the FDA, the director of Bliss GVS Pharma confessed to the FDA that Gsunate Plus suppository is fake and that no clinical trial study had been conducted on it and also admitted that it is not used to treat Malaria in children in India although malaria is prevalent in India. During the interview sessions, it also came up that the two – TPL and Bliss GVS Pharma – were made to sign an undertaking dated September 26, 2013, not to import or distribute unregistered or fake medicines into the Ghanaian market again. One of the participants had this to say concerning TPL's unqualified apology to the FDA.

*"...it was an unfortunate incident...at that moment we had to admit and move on as a company...a lot had gone wrong...there was no need to drag it..."*

- (Participant 1)

Another participant added:

*"...we learnt a lot from this incident...sometimes you lose some and other times you win some...we lost and we had to admit it at some point...it wasn't healthy playing the blame game at that point...we should have also cross-checked..."*

- (Participant 3)

Although Coombs (2010) had enunciated that the rebuild crisis strategies should most frequently be used in response to accident crises, especially when the organisation has had a history of similar crises and/or has developed a negative reputation in the past it is applicable to every crises situation. TPL's use of this strategy had little connection to an organisation having a history of similar crises but rather more prone towards salvaging a negative reputation. TPL's use of this strategy falls more in line with Huang's (2008) position that rebuilding strategies should always be considered for preventable crises where stakeholder relationships may be permanently damaged. While it may take more time to rekindle the relationship, these actions will mark the first step towards that recovery. TPL move to apologise to the FDA however, was indicative of its desire to restore stakeholder relationships and to initiate the first step towards the recovery of its bruised reputation as indicated by Huang (2008).

Relating all the above themes to the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), it can be specified that stakeholders in general assess a crisis by two factors – crisis history, which refers to whether an organisation has experienced a similar crisis before, and prior relational reputation, which is how stakeholders have perceived the organisation in other cases. An unfavourable prior relational reputation will have an effect on other cases in the future. Both factors demonstrate a direct and indirect

effect on the reputational threat posed by the crisis (Coombs, 2010). Since TPL neither had any history similar to the crisis they experienced nor had they had prior relational reputation issues with regards to how stakeholders had perceived the organisation in other cases, how it handled the said crisis situation was going to go a long way to shape stakeholders perception in future cases similar to the crisis they experienced. Thus, how TPL handled the crisis situation provides the basis for how stakeholders would perceive the organisation in other cases similar to other crises.

According to Johansen and Frandsen (2007), SCCT is based on the fundamental idea that the organisation in a crisis situation selects crisis response strategy depending on the crisis type and stakeholders' attribution of responsibility to the organisation. By implication, the theory takes the crisis situation and context into consideration in order to find the most appropriate crisis communication strategy when it comes to protecting the organisation's image in the best way possible. Relating this to TPL's crisis response strategies, it is worthy to note that in TPL's bid to minimise the seriousness of the crisis while lessening the organisation's responsibility for the crisis and re-claim its stakeholder relationships, it adopted crisis response strategies that ranged from denying responsibility to eventually apologising to rescuing reputation from soaring lower any further. This is in compliance with Coombs and Holladay's (2002) assertion that the crisis communication strategy is adjusted to the affected stakeholders more than it is adjusted to the organisation.

Coombs (2007) created a list of 10 typical crisis communication techniques based on the study of renowned identity management and crisis communication academics. These tactics are best understood as a set of four clusters of methods grouped by whether the organisation's post-crisis goal is to alter public opinion of the actual issue



or public view of the organisation itself (Coombs, 2007). By examining TPL's strategies, one can deduce that they initially attempted to sway public opinion on the issue by debunking the FDA's claim that the drugs were fake and then suing them; this was done in the hope of portraying the issue to the public as one of a miscommunication between the FDA and the manufacturer regarding the drug's efficacy. TPL eventually refocused their attention on themselves by attempting to alter public perceptions of the organisation. This they (TPL) accomplished by apologising and vowing to improve in the future. While combining both methods for influencing public opinion about the organisation and the problem is not necessarily a negative approach, it may have harmed TPL since the information they gave while using either strategy was inconsistent. This confirms Coombs' (2006) assertion that denial strategy is the riskiest of all the strategies and ought to be used with care.

#### **4.3 RQ3. How were the response strategies communicated?**

This question sought to explore how the response strategies adopted by TPL were communicated during the crisis. In responding to the question, three themes came up: *open communication at workplace*, *media engagement* and *apologising for wrongdoing*. Using the Benoit Image Restoration Theory, these themes are critically examined to explain how the response strategies adopted by TPL were communicated.

##### **4.3.1 Open Communication at Workplace**

The primary pointer for the theme of open communication was no hidden agenda or misrepresentation of information to the working staff. It was apparent from the data collected that one of the groups of people that were greatly affected by the crisis at TPL were the employees. Prior in this study, it was established that the employees

faced a range of challenges that traversed from psychological ordeals to hearsays regarding the securities of their jobs and salaries. As part of how TPL communicated the various crisis strategies, it created a culture of open communication among staff during the crisis. In some of the interactions with the participants it was demonstrated that the flow of information between managers and employees at TPL allowed all parties to be able to express ideas with one another. The participants also disclosed that the culture of open communication inspired work performance, improve employee morale, and foster a warmer corporate culture during the period of crisis. For example, one participant pointed out that:

*"...it was a very challenging moment for us (workers of TPL)...we heard a lot of rumours...what actually helped us was management's desire to interact with us (workers of TPL) regularly..."*

- (Participant 3).

Another participant also had this to say:

*"...management talked with us often...this helped a lot ... we also had the opportunity to ask and make suggestions...without these opportunities I can confidently say that it would have affected our morale and our output at work..."*

- (Participant 6).

Additionally, TPL organised weekly meetings and used the weekly meetings to share key information like board decisions and new initiatives with all employees. During such meetings, TPL ensured that key concerns or questions were addressed. This was evident in some of the information divulged by the participants concerning how the management of TPL gave opportunity to employees during meetings to ask questions and make suggestions. In addition to this, the data also revealed that management of

TPL planned these meetings to meet specified goals. For example, one participant said:

*"...we (management of TPL) ensured that the time for these meetings was scheduled for when you had information to share on the progress of the crisis ..."*

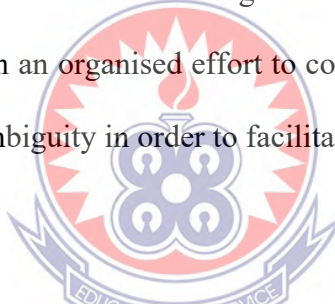
*- (Participant 4).*

It has been acknowledged by Parsons (2014) that open communication at the workplace gives everyone equal participation in the success of the organisation or business. According to Parsons (2014), creating the atmosphere of open communication at the workplace allows for energy and creativity as well as remove doubts and suspicions during turbulent times, this affirmed Atawura (2019) findings that banking sectors employed open communication to address crisis in order to seek the views of affected partners and stakeholders. To him, it makes stakeholders to get a clear view of the crisis situation. It also establishes the environment where all employees can have a good understanding of the organisation's goals. Parsons' (2014) arguments were also evident in TPL's open communication at the workplace during the crisis period. It was also evident that the employees understood the organisation's sense of direction during the period of crisis and their doubts and suspicions were cleared as some of the participants for the study indicated.

#### **4.3.2 Media Engagement**

As part of exploring how the response strategies adopted by TPL were communicated, the theme of media engagement underscores the TPL's transactions with media houses during the crisis period. One of the most important communication partners during the crisis with TPL was the media. During the beginning of the crisis, reporters

and their audience, became interested in knowing what happened and how to stay safe. Thus, the media served as an emergency broadcast system to get vital information to the publics who needed it most. Due to the ever-increasing reach and influence of the media in today's society, they have become an inseparable part of any social situation (Ansong, 2012). Media facilitates access to information for policymakers, managers and citizens alike and increases the speed with which new information is gathered, accumulated and disseminated, further increasing its role in managing situations such as natural disasters (Mitchell, 2005). Mass media can have a negative role in a crisis, increasing its scope or play a positive role and help solve the crisis. Nevertheless, the role of mass media in any crisis cannot be denied (Ansong, 2012; Mitchell, 2005). The theme of dealing with the media therefore explores how TPL engaged the media in an organised effort to control the public emotions, opinion and reduce the level of ambiguity in order to facilitate clear understanding of the crisis situation.



The data obtained with regards to TPL's communications with the media revealed that not only did TPL release press statements to the media, but they also responded to media enquiries by way of phone calls interviews and even face-to-face interviews. The public opinion was divided about the crisis due to the fact the FDA was providing a perspective on the ongoing crisis according to one of the participants for the study, TPL had to come out to clarify. These clarifications were in the form of press releases and media interviews. A participant of the study averred that:

*"...we (management of TPL) needed to address the media...it was in our interest because several stories on the crisis...we decided to provide the needed information to clarify everything..."*

- (Participant 1).

Similarly, another participant emphasised that:

*“...we (management of TPL) were aware that accurate and updated information are among the most important factors in finding solutions in crisis situations...so, we made it a point that providing the needed information to the press and the public at large was the best way for the media to help us end the crisis...”*

- (Participant 4).

Scholars have emphasised that in crisis situations, media can engage in an organised effort to control public emotions and public opinion (Mitchell, 2005; Sapriel, 2013). It is worth mentioning that without positive attitude in the media, even the best efforts of policymakers and managers would not have the best possible effect (Mitchell, 2005). In the case of TPL, it was evident that in their bid to engage the media, they provided information only from official sources to limit the number of contradictory information. Also, TPL used the media as a bridge to reach government as indicated by scholars like Falkenheimer and Heide (2006). This was what one of the participants for the study had to say about TPL using the media to reach out to the government:

*“...management knew that the central government had to come in at some point ...over 600 workers and Ghanaians were at stake...we needed to appeal to the government through the press...”*

- (Participant 2).

### **4.3.3 Apologising for Wrongdoing**

The theme of apologising for the wrongdoing however is indicative of the expression of regret or remorse for what TPL regarded as their misdeed in the crisis period. As

already been mentioned, when the Bureau of National Investigations invited the TPL and their partners Bliss GVS Pharma to assist the FDA in investigations over alleged importation of fake drugs, the Chairman of TPL, Mr. Samuel Tobbin and the Director of Bliss GVS Pharma, Mr S. N. Kamath all subsequently admitted to the charge and offered an unqualified apology to the FDA and the general public for the misconduct.

Offering apology during crisis has been acknowledged by scholars of crisis management and crisis communication as an important step in redeeming reputation during crisis (Coombs, 2010; Heath & Millar, 2004). An apology statement from an organisation rocked with a crisis condition should however communicate with active responsibility and high sympathy. It is only when it has these elements – active responsibility and high sympathy that it could be considered to be “a full apology” (Chung 2011, p. 22). Chung (2011) explains further that while an apology statement should take responsibility for crisis it should also express feelings of remorse and sorrow for misfortune their actions might have caused. Again, it is anticipated that a full apology will be the most effective crisis response for reliving public anger (Chung, 2011). In the case of TPL, they demonstrated their sense of remorse not only by admitting to the wrongdoing but by also agreeing to sign an undertaking dated September 26, 2013, not to import or distribute unregistered or fake medicines onto the Ghanaian market again. This act of acknowledging wrongdoing by TPL according to some of the participants reiterated their feelings of remorse for misfortune their actions might have caused by endangering the health and safety of the Ghanaian populace. This position was made clear in the assertions by some of the participants in the interviews:

*"...apologising was our way of saying we are sorry to everyone...we reckon with the fact that our actions had endangered everyone and put the lives of our customers at risk..."*

- (Participant 4).

Another participant added:

*"...we erred and we admitted we erred...we hold it very important not to repeat such negligent actions in the future..."*

- (Participant 5).

Relating the above explications to the Benoit's Image restoration theory, it can be well argued that TPL operated a culture of open communication at workplace to furnish employees with all the necessary information in order to rebuild, from within, the organisation's image which had been threatened. According to Jaques (2014), one primary aim of Benoit's Image restoration theory is to rebuild and protect the image of the organisation. That notwithstanding, Benoit's Image restoration theory maintains that to rebuild and protect the image of the organisation during a crisis condition, it is important to focus on reducing the responsibility by offering explanations (Jaques, 2014). This can be seen in how TPL decided to meet its internal stakeholders (employees) regularly in order to clarify and at the same time, take into consideration their concerns. More importantly TPL accepting and apologising indicated their readiness to regain their stakeholders' trust so as to rebuild their image and reputation.

#### **4.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed the findings and analysis of the research questions for the study. The data collected on the three research questions were analysed using the

theories of the situational crisis communication and Benoit's Image restoration theory. The first research question (RQ1) which sought to examine the type of crisis faced by TPL revealed three main themes: organisational crisis, financial crisis, confrontation crisis and natural crisis. A total of six themes were discussed and analysed for research questions two (RQ2) and three (RQ3). Research question two (RQ2) had three themes. They were denial strategy, the diminish strategy and the rebuilding strategy. Research question three (RQ3) on the other hand had three themes: open communication at workplace, media engagement and apologising for wrongdoing.





## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter is the concluding aspect of the study. The first section of the study comprises the summary of the findings. Additionally, the chapter also contains recommendations, the limitations, suggestions for further study and the conclusion.

#### 5.1 Summary of Findings

This study focused on the crisis communication strategies employed in the pharmaceutical industries in Ghana. By employing a case study of a crisis faced by Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited, the objective was to interrogate the nature of crisis and crisis response strategies employed by Tobinco when they encountered a crisis. It also looked at ways by which these strategies were communicated in the process. This study was premised on Benoit's Image Restoration Theory and the Situational Crisis Communication Theory. Six participants were selected from Tobinco Pharmaceuticals Limited to take part in the study via in-depth interviews and document analysis. The responses were analysed thematically and discussed. The study found that TPL encountered organisational, financial and natural crises. Diminish, Denial and Rebuilding strategies were used by TPL to communicate with their stakeholders. In addition, it was found that TPL used open communication, apology and media engagement were used to communicate with the rest of their stakeholders and the media engagement were in the form of newsletters, phone-in sections, press releases, publications, press conferences and interviews to restore the crisis situation of TPL in 2013.

## 5.2 Limitations of the Study

Numerous difficulties were faced throughout the course of the research. Gaining access to workers was very difficult, and as a result, the researcher spent a long time before getting the respondents for the interview. Additionally, the sample size was limited, limiting the ability to apply the results to other workers in different companies. Future research must broaden the study's scope and be conducted on a bigger scale, using a new approach.

Quantitative approach in research has the advantage of investigating thoroughly the causes, impact and prevalence of a given phenomenon (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002), however, due to the qualitative nature of this study, the findings cannot be generalised (Creswell, 2014). This is primarily because of the small sample size. Another significant disadvantage might be the time and effort used in the delivering and collecting the data and getting sufficient numbers of participants to respond. The major disadvantage of the interview as a data collection method is that the interviewees may not be willing to share information or may even offer false information to kotow to social desirability. In spite of these limitations the data for the study was gathered without any form of influence to affect the validity and trustworthiness of the findings.

## 5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings identified in the study and with consideration to the Ghanaian context and organisational culture, the following are outlined as recommendations for building strong crisis response strategies:

a) Internal communication is important to enable organisations prepare towards crises. This debate is extensive and in order to help persuade organisations to engage their stakeholders through open communication to help improve on their understanding of the crisis situation, there is the need for more stakeholders' engagement to ease pressure and provide clarity during crisis event.

b) The researcher recommend that not only the importance of communicating with the media and other stakeholders but also the necessity of communicating the truth during crisis event. The media amplifies any crisis scenario and the employment of lies as a tactic only serves to ensure that these lies receive maximum attention. In the event that the lies are exposed, the company stands to lose more reputation than earlier; exposing it to avoidable embarrassment, this call for the need to employ apology strategy in order to curb nerves and affected stakeholders.

c) This study proposes that the pharmaceutical industry should as of a matter of urgency, prioritize the creation of crisis communication plans before crisis hits. Due to the sensitive nature of their products (health consumption), a poorly handled crisis could lead to a permanent or long lasting negative image which could prove almost irreversible.

d) It also recommends that organisations in the pharmaceutical industry consider the effects that natural disasters could have on their operations and make crisis contingency plans to avert them. This is especially important in pharmaceutical industries where natural disasters like floods and strong winds could cause damages to warehouses and laboratories that could bring about damage to the efficacy of medicines they have in stock.

e) The study also recommend that Managers of pharmaceutical industries should adhere strictly to the Public health Act 851 specifically section 97 to 101 this may pave way for their operations and running of their industries to devoid of legal actions that they may encounter. Their obedience to laws and the Public health Act 851 will enable them to pay key attention to registration of their products which will in turn enable them to render good and quality services to their consumers.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for further study**

Based on the findings of the study, I make the following suggestions for future studies to increase the knowledge of crisis response strategies in the Ghanaian pharmaceutical industries and also serve as a repository for researchers. A comparative study can be conducted to investigate two or more industries and their approaches in responding to crises. They can employ a mixed method to ascertain the nature of crisis and the response strategies use. Further studies can explore the perspectives, perceptions and the positions of stakeholders on the response strategies used by industries affected by crises. The study can also be on the impact of the crisis response strategies on external stakeholders.

Similar work can be conducted on the impact of crisis and its response strategies on the growth of an organisation using a quantitative approach. The study must seek to investigative the rationale and the motivations of the using a response strategy in addressing crisis. An explanatory study can be conducted on the advantage of using a particular response strategy to address crisis and the mode of communication use in addressing stakeholder. It should discuss why industries use a particular response strategy in dealing with crisis. Last but not the least, content analysis can be conducted on the crisis and its preparedness by crisis management team.

## 5.5 Conclusion

This study provides an understanding of crisis response strategies employed by pharmaceutical industries in Ghana using Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited (TPL) as a case study. Basically TPL faced organisational, financial and natural crises and they employed denial, diminish and rebuild response strategies in dealing with their crises. Findings from the study confirmed that TPL communicated the response strategies through open communication, media engagement and apology to deal with their 2013 crisis. Hence this study will add up to knowledge by serving as both reference and learning material for pharmaceutical industries to broaden their scope on crisis communication.

An in-depth review of the literature and both situational crisis communication theory and Benoit's image restoration theory suggested that industries are compelled by internal and external motivations to adopt and implement crisis response strategy in dealing with crises. The findings from the study revealed that both internal and external stakeholders were satisfied with most of response strategies employed by TPL.

The findings of the study do not intend to make any generalisation; however, this findings resonate with most organisations. Therefore it will aid industries especially pharmaceutical industries to understand crisis communication and the appropriate strategies to use when dealing with crisis. The findings may also aid crisis communication team to understand crisis preparedness very well so as to be able tackle issues properly to prevent crisis occurrences.

Literature on crisis communication avowed that more often industries use denial strategy but the most appropriate crisis response strategy is diminish and thereafter rendering apology to remedy calm nerves to prevent reputational damage.

In summary, this study will help stakeholders of industries to understand the importance to crisis response strategy in reputational management of individual or industries.



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## APPENDICES

### Interview Guide

My name is Richmond Asiamah Yeboah, a student from the Graduate school of University of Education, Winneba. I would like to interview you on the nature of crisis and response strategies employed by your company during 2013. Kindly note that all your response will be kept confidential. Your responses will only be shared in my academic institution and produced as part of a final master's thesis.

Kindly introduce yourself and your portfolio.

#### **RQ1. What was the nature of crisis faced by Tobinco Pharmaceutical Limited (TPL) in 2013?**

1. Briefly outline the history of your company
2. What kind of crisis befell Tobinco in 2013?
3. Was there a clear crisis communication plan and chain of command in communication during the crisis?
4. If there was a plan, then who were the primary crisis spokespersons and backups?
5. Did TPL have a crisis management team to manage the short-term impacts and initiate appropriate countermeasures?

#### **RQ2. What strategies were employed by TPL to communicate the crisis?**

6. How did Tobinco adapt its business model to reduce cost, both in the short and medium term?
7. How was the response strategy coordinated to ensure transparency and clarity to stakeholders?
8. Why did your company adopted a particular response strategy over other strategies?

**RQ3. How were the crisis response strategies communicated?**

9. How was designated communication disseminated, by which channels and protocols?
10. Why did TPL opt for some selected media channels?
11. Are you certain that your crisis management plans have adequately been tested?
12. How can you improve on your current crisis communication strategy?

