

Addis Ababa
University

(Since 1950)



**The Role of Public Relations in Crisis Management: The Case of Ethiopian
Civil Aviation Authority**

By

Shiferaw Andargie

A Thesis Submitted to

The Graduate School of Journalism and Communication

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Public Relations and Strategic Communication**

Advisor

Dr. Gashaye Belew

Addis Ababa University

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

June, 2020

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis entitled the “The Role of Public Relations in Crisis Management: the Case of Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority” is carried out by Shiferaw Andargie under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Gashaye Belew and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master in Public Relations and Strategic Communication. The thesis complies with the regulations of the University and meets the standards with respect to originality and quality, likewise the books, journals documents and websites, which I have made use of are acknowledged at the respective place in the text.

Advisor

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who helped me in the preparation of this thesis. First and foremost my special thanks goes to Dr. Gashaye Belew for his patient advice, candid comments, unreserved and constructive criticism which whose invaluable contribution has indeed brought about the successful realization of this thesis.

I would also like to express my deepest gratitude and special thanks to Ato Wondim Teklu for his support to join the program and for his support in providing materials and advice throughout the academic years.

My profound gratitude also goes to Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority management members, employees, and stakeholders of the authority for their cooperation for the interview and generous provision of important materials for this research. I would especially like to thank Ato Anmut Lemma, director of promotion and public relations of Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority for his wholehearted support in providing materials and his all-round cooperation that really made my tasks more viable and easy.

I must express my sincere thanks to W/ro Woinshet Kebede who set her precious time aside to edit and arrange my thesis into the order of readable one. I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks to Sefanit Minwuyelet for her insightful advices, motivation and support.

Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, I must express my special thanks to my family. My indebtedness is very much indeed to our beloved mother, the late w/ro Yeshalem Yemataw (Tata) who, although no longer with us, our love for you never last forever. Oh dear Tata, you were everything for me, for the family. We never, ever forget you. We love you so much. I also extend my sincere gratitude to the family members, W/ro Aseggedech, Ato Teshome, W/ro Aberash, Dr. Baye, Beniam, Anteneh, Sergeant Fentahun, Dr. Tewodros, Fasil, Mulugonder, Betelhem, Getachew, Awoke and Muluneh, whose devotion, unconditional love and support, optimism and advice was more valuable than you could ever imagine. Words fail me in expressing my unquestionable gratitude to a true companion of my life my loving and supportive wife Amaledech, whom she has really proved to be a better-half and accommodated herself in order to lead me near the mark, and my wonderful children Eden, Amisayew, Rahel and my sweet little grandchild Manahilosh/Elihana, who provide me unending happiness and inspiration.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	I
List of Abbreviation and Acronyms	V
Abstract	VI
CHAPTER ONE	1
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Background	1
1.2. Statement of the problem	3
1.3.1. General Objective.....	5
1.3.2. Specific Objectives.....	5
1.4. Research Questions	6
1.5. Scope of the study	6
1.6. Significance of the study	6
1.7. Limitation of the study	6
CHAPTER TWO	9
2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	9
2.1. Introduction	9
2.2. Crisis	9
2.3. Types of Crises	10
2.4. Stages of Crises	12
2.5. Factors Affecting Crisis.....	12
2.6. Public Relations (PR)	13
2.7. Crisis & Public Relations	14
2.8. Crisis Planning.....	15
2.9. Crisis management.....	15
2.10.Crisis Management Team	18
2.11.Crisis communication team.....	18
2.12. Importance of crisis management	18
2.13. Crisis Communication	19
2.14. Crisis Communication Plan	20

2.15. Communication Strategy during Crises	21
CHAPTER THREE.....	23
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	23
3.1. Introduction.....	23
3.2. Research Design.....	23
3.2.1. Quantitative research method.....	23
3.2.2. Merits of Quantitative research:.....	24
3.2.3. Demerits of Quantitative research:.....	24
3.2.4. Qualitative research.....	24
3.2.4.1. Merits	25
3.2.4.2. Demerits	25
3.2.5. Mixed research	25
3.3. Research Methods	26
3.4. Research Methodology.....	27
3.5. Data Collection Instruments	28
3.5.1. In-depth interview	29
3.5.2. Focus Group Discussion (FGD).....	29
3.5.3. Document analysis	29
3.5.4. Past experience Personal Observation.....	30
3.6. Population and Sampling Technique	30
CHAPTER FOUR.....	32
4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.....	32
4.1. Practices of public relations.....	42
4.1.1. General description.....	42
4.2. Role of Public Relations in Crisis Management	44
4.3. Message constructionon in crises.....	46
4.4. Public relation and media.....	47
4.5. Challenges of public relations	48
CHAPTER FIVE	49
5. FINDINGS.....	49
CHAPTER SIX.....	51

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION.....	51
6.1. Conclusion.....	51
6.2. Recommendation.....	53
REFERENCES	54
Appendix:.....	60

List of Abbreviation and Acronyms

CC	Crisis Communication
CCM	Crisis Communication Management
CCP	Crisis Communication Planning
CCS	Crisis Communication Strategy
CM	Crisis Management
CMT	Crisis Management Team
ECAA	Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority
GM	General Manager
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
PR	Public Relations
SAR	Search and Rescue
SC	Strategic Communication

Abstract

Air transportation is the safest and the most efficient means of public transport. Over long distances and across geographical barriers, no alternative means of transport exist. However, when a crisis happens, the image of the organization may be seriously affected, and the trust of the public is diminished considerably according to the duration and severity of the crisis. However, as a planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics, public relations is supposed to have a vital role in rebuilding the relationships between an organization and its publics in order to recreate and restore positive image of its organization after crisis. This study was, therefore, conducted to find out the role of Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority's public relations in managing crisis. It investigated whether the public relations of ECAA plays its roles effectively in crisis situations or not. The study adopted the survey research design. It employed qualitative purposive sampling research method. Five research questions were also prepared in guiding the study. The primary data was collected from one-on-one in-depth interview, focus group discussion and past experience personal observation. And the secondary data was collected from document analysis. Finally, by analyzing and interpreting the data, the paper has drawn findings and conclusion. The findings of the research reveal that despite its paramount importance, the roles of public relations were found insignificant in managing crisis due to various challenges. Based on the findings, the study recommended public relations to have crisis communication plan as part of its strategic communication. It also recommended that public relations need to exert its effort to win the existing challenges hampered to perform in its all endeavors. It further recommended that Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority should support the public relations in adequate trained staffs, budges, trainings and facilities.

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study that examines the key concepts under the study. It provides a description of the basic facts and importance of the research area, which includes the background, statement of the problem, research questions, scope, significance of the study, possible limitations of the study and definitions of some important terminologies/key terms.

1.1. Background

Crisis is part of the natural world that has been seen as one of inseparable part of human history caused by natural and manmade disasters. From the most ancient religious stories of Noah's flood in the book of Genesis article 6-9 of the Holley Bible to the contemporary world, crises have been continuing being an inevitable and everlasting attribute of societies.

As Pfaltzgraff (2016), crises have been part of the personal, domestic, and international landscape from the time immemorial, from the ancient world to the twenty-first century.

According to Winkleman (1999), crisis is an unexpected event that threatens organizations' function and existence. Harwati (2013) defined a crisis as an event that "causes severe emotional and social distress, which may occur at any time and without warning.

A crisis, however, could be deliberately provoked by a group, e.g. terrorism, strike, sabotage, boycotts or computer hacking, religious and ethnic conflict, maladministration. A crisis can also occur as a result of misconduct, fraud, or changing values and behavioral patterns. During the time of crisis, effective communication strategies at all levels within the organization are therefore crucial to manage it.

As it has been observed in the due course of life, the researcher argues with the definitions and arguments made/given by different scholars of the field that crisis are unexpected in its appearance and disastrous nature having a potential to bring fundamental changes in whatever, wherever and whenever it appears. On the other hand, it could be deliberately provoked by

certain agents with same or different catastrophic ending levels. For instance, an aircraft accident of ET-s B767 (ET-AIZ) at Comoros island in 1996 in which 125 out of 175 passengers and crew on board, including the three hijackers, died. And the strike made by Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority Air Traffic Controllers (ATC) in 2018 on same industry as that of the accidents occurred by the hijackers in 1996, ended up in somewhat different level of effects.

Crises can emerge due to not only organizational structure clumsiness and insufficient management, but also general economic uncertainty and volatility, technological developments, political, legal, social and cultural changes, strong competition arising from the disadvantages and effects from international environment (Tekin, 2014).

According to the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) Crisis Management Framework Document (EUR Doc 031) -First Edition- 2014), crisis is a state of inability to provide air navigation service at required level resulting in a major loss of capacity, or a major imbalance between capacity and demand, or a major failure in the information flow following an unusual and unforeseen situation.

The researcher argues in the ICAO document because in aviation industry not only aircraft crashes considered and being a cause of crisis but inability of aircraft being in air due to bad weather conditions or strikes also considered as imminent causes for financial losses that ultimately leads crisis for the industry. Therefore, crises could be seen in different ways on different subjects with different magnitude and frequencies.

Thus, even though Air transport is believed to be one of the safest modes of transport, it does not mean that it has been totally free from any sort of accidents. In the aviation industry, 'Crashes have occurred since the dawn of aviation'' (Ray, 1999). Despite the industry's efforts to reduce factors that lead to accidents, such crises are inevitable because of the complexity of modern technologies, human factors, and the highly interdependent nature of the industry (Ray, 1999). Moreover, Ray (1999) argued that the growth of the industry combined with the lightning speed of mass communication and technology have made airline disasters larger in size, highly visible, and extremely complex to manage. As a result, crises specially related to aircraft accidents are disastrous and frustrating in its end that it can be causes for stakeholders

to detach from the organization and it intern can bring loses of image and reputation have been built through times.

In spite of the fact that the Aviation industry in Ethiopia has a long history in relation with the global aviation, aircraft accidents or any strike occurred so far is relatively low. However, aircraft crash accidents and strikes had been recorded in various occasions with different causes and effects. During such crises therefore, rebuilding the lost reputation is a matter of life and death for the industry that could be practiced by public relations employing effective communication.

According to Bussey (2011), PR is the art of presenting a company (or person) to the public, usually via the media, ideally in a positive manner that improves the reputation of that company (or person) and subsequently impacts positively on that company's sales/ uptake of that company's services/ the company or individual's overall reputation. Therefore, the role of public relations remains crucial in pre, during and post crises times at least to minimize the negative imposition on a given company.

In view of this, the study examined the role of public relations in crisis management using crisis communication as integral parts of crisis management to manage crisis within the authority by assessing practices, challenges, public relations of ECAA. In this regard, the research could benefit aviation public relations professionals who plan for and implement crisis plans to manage crisis. Most importantly, management hierarchy will better understand the crucial role of public relations in crisis management.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Crisis situations can happen everywhere, anytime, to everybody. Crises are part of each-day life (Bakos, 2017). It always may arise either between individuals, groups, organizations, states due to contradictions and conflicts to achieve basic interests or political, economic and social aspirations that might all end up with endless wars, killing of thousands each year, and displacing millions of others.

Similarly, crisis in the aviation industry is also devastating in human life and in financial losses even though the industry has been considered to be the safest modes of transport.

Chen (2015) stated that even though they are also rare, crash events are always catastrophic. Besides, Chen (2015) said that even with the advancements in aeronautical technology and weather forecasting, aviation accidents still cannot be avoided. We still hear news about aircraft crashes, loss of control and disappearance due to human errors (e.g. pilot and maintenance error), bad weather mechanical failure or sabotage.

Ray (1961) also affirmed that major air-carrier crashes are large-scale events that involve numerous stakeholders, receive considerable media coverage, and are characterized by surprise, threat, uncertainty, time pressures, and extreme emotions. Critical issues which emerge following a crash may result in airline contending with accusations of blame, irresponsibility, or inadequacy. Under these conditions, a company must provide appropriate and effective responses. If not, it would be as Chen (2015) stated that the media tends to misrepresent the accident causes and usually lacks accurate safety knowledge, giving rise to negative spillover effects not only to air transport users but also to the society.

In the past 75 years of the Ethiopian Aviation history, even though the type and frequency of accidents rarely occurred, the industry has been experiencing a fatal aircraft accidents and strikes ending up with hundreds of death tolls and substantial revenue loses respectively. Moreover, they have had their own negative impact on the image and reputation of the industry. For instance, aircraft accidents of ET-s B767 (ET-AIZ) in the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros, in the Indian Ocean on November 23, 1996 in which 125 out of 175 passengers and crew on board, including the three hijackers, died. ET 409 – Boeing 737-800 in Republic of Lebanon in 2010, in which 90 passengers and crew that perished hail from nine countries and ET-302 crash on 10 March 2019 Ethiopia near the town of Bishoftu that there were no survivors among the 157 occupants, and the Air Traffic Controllers' strike in the same year of ET-302's were a few crashes left imposing their own negative impact on the reputation and growth of the industry.

However, ECAA, which has the leading role for safe flight operations/air transportation, works in taking preventive measure to narrow down the occurrences of accidents by certifying capable pilots, ground technicians and flight attendances. It is also responsible in mitigating the damage during crisis by taking urgent and effective actions of search and rescue. According to some research findings in ICAO, even though the nature of crash landing matters , there may

be possibilities of saving 55% of passengers if the search and rescue team reach at within 2 hours at the accident area and take proper actions to save lives.

Furthermore, ECAA has also been mandated in announcing the accidents for the stakeholders and the public at large in very careful ways to save them from nuclear and exaggerated media news that could create confusion and frustration, and also to protect the company from bankruptcy and loss of goodwill and so that to restore its reputation. Organization has no choice other than to engage in true dialogue with publics and to practice socially responsible behavior when a crisis occurs and symmetrical communication is mandatory at the time of a crisis and essential at all other times (Grunig, 2001).

In this regard, however, Public relations as effective crisis communication tool is very important that should be given more emphasis since it helps organizations in dealing with the crisis that has the probability of bringing a lot of harm to the organizations' image and reputation. If it is so, it is not to be wrong asking a question to know what the role of public relations of Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority in this regard. This study was, therefore, conducted to find out the role of Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority's public relations in managing crisis.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1.3.1. General Objective

The general objective of the study is to examine role of ECAA's public relations in crisis management and how to handle their stakeholders after being involved in an accident.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

- To assess the role of public relations in managing crises at ECAA
- To examine public relations tools used in managing the crises at ECAA
- To evaluate public relations messages in managing crises at ECAA
- To assess challenges hindering public relations in managing crises at ECAA
- To assess the ECAA's support to its public relations.

1.4. Research Questions

The study answered the following research questions.

- What was the role of public relations in managing crises at ECAA?
- What public relations tools were used in managing crises at ECAA?
- How a public relations office crafts messages during crises at ECAA?
- What were the challenges hindering public relations in managing crises at ECAA?
- How does the ECAA support its public relations?

1.5. Scope of the study

The focus of this study is to explore and analyze the role of public relations in crisis management: the case on of Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority. The researcher uses purposive sampling and gathers primary data through one-to-one in-depth interview, two focus group discussion and past experience personal observation. The secondary data were collected from document analysis. For the one-on-one in-depth interview five top management members and 4 public relations were selected for interview based on their experience and engagement. From the two focus groups one was formed from stakeholders having six members and the other was formed with five members from management members and employees. To give a wide range viewpoint on the case, the researcher collects secondary data from different sources such as websites in addition to document analysis. Therefore, the researcher examined the role of ECAA' public relations in managing crisis.

1.6. Significance of the study

This study will benefit the Ethiopian Aviation Industry in crisis management nothing has been done on the subject. It will also serve as a starting point for other researchers who will be interested in the subject of this research, and it will also be valuable to the industry and public relations experts as more knowledge has been gained from the research.

1.7. Limitation of the study

Although qualitative research is criticized by its subjectivity, the researcher attempted to lessen the limitation by gathering data from different but having immense knowledge and

experiences within the industry. Besides the virtue of proximity of the researcher to the industry was a great asset to own past experience personal observation.

The researcher gathered data from in-depth interview with four public relations practitioners, five top management members, and two focus group participants in which one group had 5 members and the other one six.

The researcher experienced difficulty in collecting data via individual in-depth interview and focus group discussion due to CORONAVIRUS (COVID 19). Since the majority of employees were in vacation to keep social distancing, it was hard time to get individual informants for interview. It was again so intricate in conducting focus group discussion due to State of Emergency that prohibits gathering of four and more than four people together. However, after many ups and downs it became realized with its own limitation.

Had it not be the case, the researcher believes more data would be collected and more results could have been obtained from more number of focus group discussion participants.

Finally, time constraint because of job overload and time elapsed for nothing to get informants due to known reason, the global pandemic COVID 19, was another intricacy left behind in mind to be remembered for so long.

1.8. Definition of key Concepts/Terms

- **Public:** Customers and staff of Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority
- **Stakeholders:** Person, organization, social group, or society at large that has a stake in which they may be internal or external having vital interest to ECAA.
- **Public Relations:** it is the practice of managing the spread of information between the Authority and its publics.
- **Crisis:** it is significant threat to operations that can have negative consequences if not handled properly.
- **Communication:** it is the act of conveying information for the purpose of creating a shared understanding.
- **Crisis communication:** it is exchange of information between public authorities, organizations, the media, affected individuals and groups before, during and after a crisis.
- **Crisis Management:** it is the process by which ECAA deals with a major event that threatens to harm its publics.
- **Crisis communication plan:** it is an essential tool in dealing with a crisis, disaster or accident
- **Crisis management Team:** it is group of people formed to manage crisis.

CHAPTER TWO

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses and evaluates the literature and other secondary sources related to the research topic to establish a deeper understanding of the role of public relations in crisis management and its impact to limit the damage and rebuilt organizational reputation.

2.2. Crisis

Coombs (2011) defines crisis as a significant threat to operations that can have negative consequences if not handled properly. Regester (1995) defines a crisis as “an event that causes the organization to become the subject of widespread potentially unfavorable attention from the media and other external groups such as shareholders, politicians, trade unionists and environmental pressure groups who for one reason or another, have a vested interest in the actions of the organization.

A crisis is an event which has the potential to fundamentally change an organization. It is a concrete threat to the well-being, credibility, reputation, and possibly even the existence, of a business (Waryjas, 1999). A crisis is an event that disrupts normal operations of a company or organization and, if badly managed, can ruin hard-won reputations in just days and even, in some cases, destroy companies (Tench&Yeomans, 2009)

According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (7th edition), crisis entails a time of great danger, difficulty or confusion when problems must be solved or important decisions must be made.

According to Nwosu (1996) views crisis as “any event, issue, occurrence or situation that could be described as a turning point, for better or for worse, viewed in this way, we can see that crisis has both positive and negative valences and scores as a change agent or factor in organizational management. Crisis is one major force that can cause change in any organization; crisis is an enviable page in any organization history. This *means* there is no clear

departure of the concept of crisis in an organization. Crisis is a departure or expected and usual.

Crisis can occur as a result of an action of omission or negligence; even a natural disaster can trigger crisis in an organization. Crisis can either be violent or nonviolent in nature (Solu 1994). However, in as much as crisis is an inevitable situation, there is always the need to develop pre-emptive strategic method to prevent its occurrence. But in case crisis occurs and poses great danger, difficulty or uncertainty, the big questions for public relations experts or managers is: what do they do? How best do they utilize their training and knowledge to resolve a situation that is unstable and capable of a highly undesirable outcome?

Crises are large-scale, unexpected, serious, negative developments. They are likely to create instant chaos, regardless of how well your company is managed under normal business conditions. A crisis is an event that disrupts normal operations of a company or organization and, if badly managed, can ruin hard-won reputations in just days and even, in some cases, destroy companies (Tench & Yeomans, 2009)

A crisis is an event which has the potential to fundamentally change an organization. It is a concrete threat to the well-being, credibility, reputation, and possibly even the existence, of a business.

As defined and conceptualized above, the term crisis has different meanings. Several scholars of the field define it in various ways even though most of them whom they wrote about crisis have the same stance in the destructive, frustrating nature of it and that crises' potential in bringing fundamental changes be it on an organization, politics, environment, and so on and correct threat to the well-being, credibility, reputation, and possibly even the existence of the subject. Effective crisis management protects companies, their reputations and, at times, can salvage their very existence.

2.3. Types of Crises

There are different ways of identifying types of crises. According to Ulmer, Sellnow & Seeger (2007), the simplest and the most useful ways of identifying type crises is the process of

categorization of them into intentionally caused crises and crises caused by natural, uncontrollable factors.

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.

Crises are different. They are different in nature, magnitude, effect coverage and so on. But they have also similarities. Moore and Lakha (2006) note, it being very difficult to decide on a generally accepted definition of crisis, it may be better to look at the characteristics of such an event. Whilst every crisis is different there are often shared characteristics, namely

- there is an element of surprise;
- there is a perceived or real loss of control, particularly during the early stages;
- there are no immediate obvious solutions;
- there is a shortage of time;
- the events outpace the response by the organization, at least during the early stages;
- there is an escalating flow of events that become more intensive;
- there is insufficient information when it is most needed; occasionally there may be too much information;
- important interests are at stake such as a threat to resources or people;
- there is a lack of resources, at least during the early stages;
- there is intense scrutiny from the outside;
- the key players develop a siege mentality;

- the regular decision-making processes are disrupted;
- there is an urgent need for rapid decision making, particularly in the short-term;
- Affected managers focus on short-term planning/decisions/actions.

2.4. Stages of Crises

The Crisis has different stages. Coombs (2007), divided the crisis management process into three macro stages: pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis (macro level), each containing a number of more specific sub stages (micro level). Thus, the pre-crisis stage encompasses all aspects of crisis preparation and crisis prevention. The crisis stage includes the measures taken to cope with the trigger event and the active crisis response, and the post-crisis stage reflects the period after the crisis is considered resolved, including the following learning and resolution phases (Coombs, 2007).

1. Pre-Crisis Stage, when the “critical situation” starts and the organization become aware of it.
2. Acute-Crisis Stage, when the “critical situation” is not being controlled during the Pre-Crisis stage and it becomes visible outside the organization
3. Post-Crisis Stage, which occurs when the crisis is contained and the organization, is trying to recoup its reputation and/or losses

2.5. Factors Affecting Crisis

As Ray (1999) described, there are seven factors influencing a crisis. These are:

- a. Pre-crisis planning: Management’s ability to handle a crisis situation and the potential of a crisis to escalate is often determined by the quality and thoroughness of the company’s prior planning.
- b. Organizational perception: The level of uncertainty is often determined by the perceptions of the decision makers.

- c. Stakeholder perception: Stakeholder perceptions of an organization's credibility influence the perceived effectiveness of that organization's response in a given situation.
- d. Uncertainty: The absence of needed information is a primary characteristic of a crisis and an influential factor in determining the direction of the crisis.
- e. Stress: A crisis is a manager's worst nightmare. Lost lives, financial devastation, and fear of damaged credibility and legitimacy increase the level of stress associated with a crisis. In the context of a crisis, stress can impact management's ability to effectively communicate and manage the crisis.
- f. Involved groups: A number of individuals and groups may be directly involved. Various parties who are basically unfamiliar with one another must learn to adapt and relate: victims; government authorities; elected officials and politicians; and crisis management teams.
- g. Decision making: A crisis is a situation requiring quick decisions between a limited numbers of options. A lack of action generally results in negative consequences.

2.6. Public Relations (PR)

A Public relation has several definitions. As Harlow (1976) scoured through 472 definitions of public relations to come up with the following paragraph:

Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinions; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change; serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools (Harlow 1976). As a bond to bind the relations between the organizations and its public in both the good and bad

times, public relations plays a vital role create and maintain their relations for their mutual benefit.

The 1978 World Assembly of Public Relations Associations in Mexico agreed that:

Public relations is the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization leaders and implementing planned programs of action which will serve both the organization's and the public interest (Theaker, 2004).

The British Institute of Public Relations (1994) defines it as deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish mutual understanding between an organization and the public. The Mexican definition which was as a result of International conference held in Mexico City in 1978, says, Public relations practice is the art and social science of analyzing trend, predicting their consequences, counseling organization leader, and implementing planned programmer of action which will serve both the organization and the public interest.

Public relations is a strategic communication process companies, individuals, and organizations use to build mutually beneficial relationships with the public. A public relations specialist drafts a specialized communication plan and uses media and other direct and indirect mediums to create and maintain a positive brand image and a strong relationship with the target audience. The main objective of public relations is to maintain a positive reputation of the brand and maintain a strategic relationship with the public, prospective customers, partners, investors, employees and other stakeholders who leads to a positive image of the brand and makes it seem honest, successful, important, and relevant (AASHISH PAHWA, 2019). These all definitions and views of scholars imply that public relations as tie and bridge between the organization and its stakeholders, customers and the public at large assists to continue their mutual understanding and acceptance even during the bad days of crisis of the organization.

2.7. Crisis & Public Relations

The damages caused to the organization may be extremely serious unless a correct management of communication is taken into consideration which, in such a situation, is more than necessary (Petrovici, 2014). It has been believed that public relations are considered as an

efficient tool in managing crisis through effective communication designed and planned ahead of time.

According to Petrovici (2014) Public relations may be defined like a set of means used by organizations or institutions to create a climate of confidence and sympathy among its own staff, as well as among the public.

In a crisis situation, the image of the organization may be seriously affected, and the trust of the public is diminished considerably, according to the size and duration of the crisis. Thus, as public relations is responsible in working to be a bridge between organizations and its public to create and maintain mutual understanding in all good days, it should also strive in such a way that during bad days/crisis to rebuild reputation of the organization.

2.8. Crisis Planning

As Hough (2005) stated that traditionally, the field of crisis management has addressed the actions taken by an organization when confronted by a crisis. Caponigro (2000) as in cited Hough (2005) defines crisis management as the function that works to minimize the impact of a crisis and help the organization gain control of the situation, while Whitman and Mattord (2003) define crisis management as the actions taken during and after a disaster. While proper management of an existing crisis is important, actively planning to prevent crises and to mitigate the effects of those crises which cannot be prevented is critical. To date, little attention has been given to this key component of crisis management. Crisis planning can be defined as proactively assessing and addressing vulnerabilities to avoid or minimize the impact of crises. It focuses on the activities that should be addressed before a crisis ever looms.

2.9. Crisis management

Crisis public relations (PR) management is one of the most critical aspects of modern communications (Tench and Yeomans, 2009).

As Petrovici (2014) crises management represents a set of factors designed particularly to prevent crises and reduce the damage to the organization and the audiences involved.

According to Coombs (2015), crisis management represents a set of factors designed to combat crises and to lessen the actual damage inflicted. Whereas Ray (1999) states that crisis management is a continuous process of recognizing and responding to factors associated with a potential or actual crisis and its resolution. The fundamental idea or tenet in crisis management is that crises can be managed much more effectively if the company prepares comprehensive strategies and remedies. Therefore, crisis management deals with the analysis of a crisis by looking at some clues or signs, and recommending methods of prevention and involvement. Caponigro (2000) defines crisis management as the function that works to minimize the impact of a crisis and help the organization gain control of the situation, while Whitman and Mattord (2003) define crisis management as the actions taken during and after a disaster.

As Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006), in terms of image, the prejudices for the organization may be extremely serious if the crisis situation is not managed correctly, so as to curb its negative effects. Crisis management becomes, in this case, a strategic imperative, because it is only a matter of time until any company may be affected by an organizational crisis, or a crisis generated by a product, which could threaten its performances or even its future. In this context, it goes without saying that good communication during a crisis can only be beneficial, able to improve and even stop the negative reactions of the public.

Crisis management is a challenge any organization can face and one that many fail. When crisis management fails, stakeholders and organizations suffer. All organizations must become prepared for crises (Coombs, 2015). Organizations, therefore, should either take proactive measure or attempt to lessen the damage if crisis once happened in its existence.

Crisis management has evolved from emergency preparedness and, drawing from that base, comprises a set of four interrelated factors: prevention, preparation, response, and revision.

1. Prevention, also known as mitigation, represents the steps taken to avoid crises. Crisis managers often detect warning signs and then take actions designed to prevent the crisis. Prevention is largely unseen by the public. News stories about crises that did not happen are rare.

2. Preparation is the best-known factor in crisis management because it includes the crisis management plan (CMP). If people know nothing else about crisis management, they know an organization should have a CMP. The CMP is the tip of the crisis management iceberg. Although people think the CMP is the crisis management process, in actuality most of the process is unseen.
3. Response is the application of the preparation components to a crisis. A crisis can be simulated (as in an exercise) or real. The preparation components must be tested regularly. The testing involves running simulated crises and drills that determine the fitness of the CMP, crisis team members, spokespersons, and the communication system. A real crisis involves the execution of the same crisis management resources, only the outcomes are real rather than hypothetical. Response is very public during an actual crisis. An organization's crisis management response is frequently reported and critiqued in the news media (Pearson & Clair, 1998).
4. Revision is the fourth crisis factor. It involves evaluation of the organization's response in simulated and real crises, determining what it did right and what it did wrong during its crisis management performance. The organization uses this insight to revise its prevention, preparation, and response efforts.

While proper management of an existing crisis is important, actively planning to prevent crises and to mitigate the effects of those crises which cannot be prevented is critical. Thus, organizations should avoid negligence in preparing themselves to prevent, or if not to reduce the crises.

Although as the saying goes that crisis panning is like buying insurance, the attention has been given to this key component of crisis management is still derisory. However, it should be noted that ‘‘Effective crisis management protects companies, their reputations and, at times, can salvage their very existence’’ (Tench & Yeomans, 2009).

Crisis planning can be defined as proactively assessing and addressing vulnerabilities to avoid or minimize the impact of crises. It focuses on the activities that should be addressed before a crisis ever looms.

2.10. Crisis Management Team

A team is a group of people working towards a common goal. Katzenbach and Smith (1993) note that a team can simply be defined as a small number of people, with a set of performance goals, who have a commitment to a common purpose and an approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable. According Fapohunda (2013) teamwork is an integration of resources and inputs working in harmony to achieve organizational goals, where roles are prescribed for every organization member, challenges are equally faced and incremental improvements are sought continually. Team Building involves the process of enabling the group of people to reach their goals.

A crisis management team consists of a few individuals that have the responsibility to develop crisis management plans. The individuals are selected from different departments in order for the CMT to handle a wide array of crises scenarios. The common members of the crisis team as public relations, legal, security, operations, finance, and human resources. Time is saved because the team already knows on who will do the basic tasks required in a crisis. Plans and teams are of little value if they are never tested. Management cannot know how well an untested crisis management plan with work or the crisis team can perform to expectations. Training is needed so that team members can practice making decisions in a crisis situation. Each crisis is different demanding that crisis teams make decisions.

2.11. Crisis communication team

It is one of the elements of crisis communication. Depending on the size of the organization, a crisis communication team may be comprised of the CEO, the head of public relations, the heads of key operating units, the head of human resources, the safety or security officer, and the corporate counsel. Additionally, a communications manager should be appointed to coordinate communications with first responders, investigators and others needing access to company information.

2.12. Importance of crisis management

According to various crisis management experts, the term “crisis management” could be defined as “special measures taken to solve problems caused by a crisis” (Devlin 2007).

In accordance with the above definition and in real sense of facts, crisis management is a serious effort to lessen the harmful outcomes of a severe crisis event using limited resources under extreme time constraints.

In most cases, crisis management focuses more in damage control. The essence of crisis management is cultivating the potential successes lurk among the pitfalls through careful planning, decisive execution, and good luck.

The key to the survival of any organization in a time of crisis is its ability to manage the crisis effectively by planning, preparing, training and taking decisive action designed to protect the organization's image.

2.13. Crisis Communication

Crisis communication is part of crisis management. It includes systematic efforts intended to prevent or lessen the negative outcomes of a crisis and thereby protect the stakeholders, the organization, and/or industry from harm (Coombs, 1999)

It as unpredictable event needs quick effective responses so as to stabilize stakeholders. Communication strategy is a plan for communicating information related to a specific issue, event, situation, or audience. As Coombs (2010) communication, therefore, is “the collection, processing and dissemination of information required to address a crisis situation”. That is, organizations can use communication to provide explanations about a crisis with a view to influencing stakeholders' perceptions of the organization and crisis.

The major focus of crisis communication is on how communication is used to manage information and meaning during a crisis (Coombs, 2009). Effective communication is one of the most important tools to manage crises. In view of this Coombs (2015) stated that Crisis communication is the life blood of crisis management. When crisis communication is ineffective, so is the crisis management effort.

As Ray (1999), the focus of communication during a crisis is to “influence publics' perception of the organization and to maintain a positive image or restore a damaged image among stakeholders”.

Communicating before, during and after crisis may engender sympathy to the organization and further enable stakeholders to support the organization all through the crisis.

2.14. Crisis Communication Plan

Crisis planning can be defined as proactively assessing and addressing vulnerabilities to avoid or minimize the impact of crises. It focuses on the activities that should be addressed before a crisis ever looms (Hough, 2005).

Anthonissen (2008) the crisis communication plan is an essential tool in dealing with a crisis, disaster or accident. Every company, regardless of the sector that it operates in, the type of activity or size of the company, should have an up-to-date crisis communication plan.

There is a saying that Crisis planning is like buying insurance. No country, company or organization is immune to crisis. Being able to effectively respond in the event of a crisis is relevant to an organizations survival. Meticulously planned crisis communication strategies not only enable organizations to recover from the aftermath of a shock wave but also benefit from the analysis of the dangers and draw consequences for future actions (Wekesa, 2013). In doing so crisis communication plan plays a tremendous contribution so s to regain altitude as well as to perpetuate the business. Crisis communication plan provides the right message; people and time. Crisis communication plan mainly has the following elements. These are: positioning, designated spokesperson, media policies and procedures, practicing tough questions, prepared statements, sample news release, collateral materials, key audiences, contact log, speaker's presentations, and handling media interviews as the blueprint of the crisis communication plan for PR. When faced with a crisis, organizations need to communicate strategically with stakeholders in order to sustain the legitimacy of the organization. Legitimacy is the perception that an organization is good, credible, and honest, and has a right to continue operations. Since legitimacy is neither moral nor ethical, practical measurements are essential and are also needed.

Every organization, regardless of size, should have a crisis communication plan, and there are no exceptions, merely differences of degree (Fink, 2000). Perception often takes precedence over reality in a crisis, and companies must be prepared to respond quickly and proactively ma

nage a crisis situation. Depending on the size and scope of the organization, crisis communication plans can vary greatly from the simplest plan to a complex analysis of a variety of crisis scenarios.

While the exact type or timing of a crisis cannot be determined, preparing a crisis communication plan as a proactive measure will provide any organization with the necessary tools needed to immediately address media inquiries, manage and control messaging, and protect its brand

2.15. Communication Strategy during Crises

A communication strategy needs to be chosen from among alternative communication strategies based on the specific circumstances. That is, strategic communication focuses on the design of the message. In crisis, crafting message is a critical task that should be carefully done by public relations to release information to media consumption with most intention that could save the organization. Organizations essentially have five different options when communicating during crisis: to deny responsibility, to hedge responsibility, to ingratiate the organization with its stakeholders, to make amends, and to elicit sympathy (Ray, 1999).

- A. **Deny responsibility:** Organizations may choose to deny any association with or responsibility for the cause of an event. Four tactics serve to deny responsibility: directly deny, expand denial, redirect blame, and aggression. Direct denial is a simple statement denying any accountability for the event. Expansion of denial goes further by explaining why the organization is not responsible for the event. An organization may redirect blame to another source as a method for denying responsibility. In situations where an accuser wrongly places blame, an organization may choose more aggressive tactics, such as confronting or attacking the accuser. In addition, refutation strategies seek to eliminate the crisis in a way that an organization uses strategies of refutation the leaders must be absolutely sure they are correct in stating that a crisis does not exist.
- B. **Hedge responsibility:** A more viable alternative may be to hedge or evade responsibility for the event. Hedging responsibility allows the organization to distance itself from the crisis, or duck responsibility. Four tactics function to dodge responsibility: excuses, escape-gloating, pleading ignorance, and refuting evidence. An organization may offer

excuses, which explain extenuating circumstances or justify some action. Scrape-goading enables the organization to place primary responsibility on another. An organization may plead ignorance by stating there was a lack of significant information about the situation. Or the organization may be in a position to refute or argue conflicting evidence to reduce responsibility.

- C. **Ingratiation:** The ingratiation strategy is designed to win stakeholders' support for the organization and reduce negative feelings toward the organization. One ingratiation tactic is to accentuate the positive. The organization must identify and reinforce positive aspects of the organization. A second tactic is to create identification between the organization and its stakeholders. Organizations attempt to become identified with symbols, values, or institutions, which have a strong base of public acceptance. A third tactic is to acknowledge others positively. Positively acknowledging another generally gains approval from the acknowledged recipient, and may possibly leave a positive impression on other stakeholders.
- D. **Make amends:** Organizations may choose to make amends in an effort to win forgiveness for the event. This is done in three ways: apologies, remunerate, and right the wrong. An apology expresses regret over the event and requests forgiveness. Organizations may remunerate victims with money or other services in an effort to reduce negative feelings toward the organization. Finally, by righting the wrong the organization demonstrates concern and regret by correcting the problem. Necessary changes are made to prevent the recurrence of the event. Forgiveness strategies attempt to win forgiveness of the public and to create acceptance for the crises. Negative feelings may be lessened if an organization takes positive actions to help the victims of a crisis.
- E. **Elicit sympathy:** The final strategic option is to elicit sympathy. This approach portrays the organization as an innocent victim. Sympathetic stakeholders tend to be less critical and the organization is likely to be placed in a positive light. Remorse or repentance or sorrow is a forgiveness strategy that simply asks for forgiveness. If an organization apologizes for the crisis, the negatives associated with the crisis should be lessened as people accept the apology and forgive the organization for its offences.

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This particular chapter will discuss the research design, methodology, research methods data collection instruments, population and sampling techniques adopted to carry out this research.

3.2. Research Design

Research design is plan and procedures for the studied subject that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2009). It is a framework of methods and techniques chosen by a researcher to combine various components of research in a reasonably logical manner so that the research problem is efficiently handled. It provides insights about how to conduct research using a particular methodology. The overall decision involves which design should be used to study.

Research design is the logical and systematic planning and directing the research. The design results from translating a general scientific model into varied research problems. Research design is a comprehensive plan for data collection in an empirical research project (Nayak 2015). Research methods can be classified in to qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods.

3.2.1. Quantitative research method

Quantitative research is a study involving the use and analyses of numerical data using statistical techniques. They pose questions of who, what, when, where, how much, how many, and how. Quantitative research methods are designed to produce statistically reliable data that tells us how many people do or think something. Quantitative data typically is in numerical form such as averages, ratios or ranges (Nayak, 2015).

Creswell (2009) defined quantitative research as a type of research that is “explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics).”

Quantitative research is based on the measurement of quantity or amount. It is applicable to phenomena that can be expressed in terms of quantity.

As Nayak (2015) quantitative research has the following merits and demerits;

3.2.2. Merits of Quantitative research:

- Can be used when large quantities of data need to be collected.
- The result is usually numerical (quantifiable) and hence considered more “objective”.
- The data is considered quantifiable and usually generalizable to a larger population.
- It can allow seeing changes overtime and help develop quantitative indicators.
- It can provide a clear, quantitative measure to be used for grants and proposals.

3.2.3. Demerits of Quantitative research:

- Results need to be calculated using Excel, Access, or data analysis software (such as SPSS), which may not always be accessible.
- Time consuming, as the researcher needs to enter, clean and then analyze the data.
- The larger the sample, the more time it takes to analyze the data and analyze results.
- The larger the sample the more time it takes to collect data.
- The quantitative data ignores a very important human element.

3.2.4. Qualitative research

According to Kothari (1990), qualitative is concerned with qualitative phenomenon, i.e., phenomena relating to or involving quality or kind.

It is a systematic scientific inquiry which seeks to build a holistic, largely narrative, description to inform the researcher’s understanding of a social or cultural phenomenon. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993) qualitative research is defined as, “primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among categories.”

Creswell (2009) qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of

research involves emerging questions and procedures data typically collected in the participant's setting data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data.

Although, qualitative research appears to be an important concept under which a variety of issues may be placed, it has its own positive and negative perspectives.

3.2.4.1. Merits

As Shidur (2016), qualitative research approach produces the thick (detailed) description of participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences; and interprets the meanings of their actions, and qualitative research admits the researchers to discover the participants' inner experience, and to figure out how meanings are shaped through and in culture.

Shidur (2016)) qualitative research methods such as participant-observation, unstructured interviews, direct observation, describing records are most commonly used for collecting data.

3.2.4.2. Demerits

One of the main demerits of qualitative approaches to corpus analysis is that their findings cannot be extended to wider populations with the same degree of certainty that quantitative analyses can. This is because the findings of the research are not tested to discover whether they are statistically significant or due to chance. The aim of qualitative analysis is a complete, detailed description. No attempt is made to assign frequencies to the linguistic features which are identified in the data, and rare phenomena receives (or should receive) the same amount of attention as more frequent phenomena. Qualitative analysis allows for fine distinctions to be drawn because it is not necessary to shoehorn the data into a finite number of classifications (Atieno, 2009).

3.2.5. Mixed research

With the development and perceived legitimacy of both qualitative and quantitative research in the social and human sciences, mixed methods research employing the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches has gained popularity. This popularity is because research methodology continues to evolve and develop, and mixed methods is another step

forward, utilizing the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research (Creswell, 2009). It is an approach to inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms of research. It involves philosophical assumptions, the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and the mixing of both approaches in a study.

As Creswell (2009) cited from (Creswell & Plano Clark. 2007) Mixed methods research is an approach to inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms. It involves philosophical assumptions, the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and the mixing of both approaches in a study. Thus, it is more than simply collecting and analyzing both kinds of data; it also involves the use of both approaches in tandem so that the overall strength of a study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research.

3.3. Research Methods

Research method is one of the elements in the framework of research design that involve the forms of data collection, analysis, and interpretation that researchers propose for their studies. It is useful to consider the full range of possibilities of data collection and to organize these methods, for example, by their degree of predetermined nature, their use of closed-ended versus open-ended questioning, and their focus on numeric versus nonnumeric data analysis. On the other end of the continuum, collecting data might involve visiting a research site and observing the behavior of individuals without predetermined questions or conducting an interview in which the individual is allowed to talk openly about a topic, largely without the use of specific question (Creswell 2007).

Considering its merits and demerits the research methods with the specific nature would be conducted, the researcher prefers and decides to use purposive qualitative research method. It is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Purposive sampling is a popular strategic approach to the creation of an appropriate sample size. Ritchie et al. (2003), defined as a strategy where “Members of a sample are chosen with a purpose to represent a location or type in relation to the criterion”

It is important technique not merely to avoid being overloaded by data and encountered with a problem of diminishing return, qualitative research by its very nature demands fairly small sample size. Ritchie et al. (2003), suggests that within qualitative research the sample size is usually small primarily because phenomena only need to appear once to be part of the analytical map.

Since the research is based on purposive qualitative methods to explain the rich experiences, the researcher selected 5 top management members and 4 experts with public relations. Besides, two focus group discussions with 5 and 6 members were conducted.

The participants in one-on-one in-depth interviewees and focus group discussion are members of the managements and employees as well as stakeholders of Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority. The informants were highly knowledgeable and experienced in the industry. Their position is also more related to the subject of research area. So they are in a position to hit the peak of the issue in relations to crisis management in the Aviation industry in Ethiopia. Except one director and 2 experts, the rest in-depth interview and focus group discussion participants have more than 25 years of experience in the aviation industry of Ethiopia.

The topic of the interviews was given to the interviewees when requesting an interview, but the pre-planned interview questions were not revealed to them before the interview. In addition to the pre-planned questions, the interviewees were encouraged to elaborate on the themes of the interview and, in the end, to add anything that they found important to the topic that was missing from the initial questions.

3.4. Research Methodology

Research methodology is a collective term for the structured process of conducting research. There are many different methodologies used in various types of research and the term is usually considered to include research design, data gathering and data analysis.

Research methodology seeks to inform: Why a research study has been undertaken, how the research problem has been defined, in what way and why the hypothesis has been formulated, what data have been collected and what particular method has been adopted, why particular technique of analyzing data has been used and a host of similar other questions are usually answered when we talk of research methodology concerning a research problem or study.

According to Nayak (2015) it is a research strategy that translates ontological and epistemological principles into guidelines that show how research is to be conducted and principles, procedures, and practices that govern research. There are varieties of research methodologies with no single accepted research methodology applicable to all research problems. Each research methodology has its own relative weakness and strength. No single research methodology is necessarily ideal and that selection inevitably involves loss as well as gain.

Accordingly the researcher selects qualitative research method for this study even though, both quantitative and qualitative (mixed) research methods can be applied with all mentioned data collection instruments, the researcher in this particular case used qualitative purposive sampling research method due to the specificity nature of the study that needs knowledgeable and experienced interviewees to answer the questions that would be specifically raised to them in the area the researcher stirred to study /the role of public relations in crisis management in ECAA.

Moreover, as Nayak (2015) a case research is an in-depth investigation of a problem in one or more real-life settings (case sites) over an extended period of time. Data may be collected using a combination of in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, past experience personal observations, and internal or external documents. Therefore, the researcher selects data collection instruments which are relevant for qualitative research method.

3.5. Data Collection Instruments

There are several data collection instruments for qualitative purposive research methods. Focused Group Discussion, In-depth interview, Document analysis, personal observations are

commonly used data collection instruments. Therefore, the researcher identifies and focused on the followings data collection instruments.

3.5.1. In-depth interview

It is a qualitative interview that the researcher conducts face-to-face interviews with participants, interviews participants by telephone, or engages in focus group interviews with six to eight interviewees in each group. These interviews involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants.

Observation, qualitative observation means that the researcher takes field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site and records observations.

It is a systematic process of collecting information, in which researchers observe a given phenomenon in their natural environment. This method is especially indicated when a given topic is relatively unexplored and it becomes important to understand in detail a given phenomenon, while maintaining the environmental conditions in which it occurs. Observation is a good way of collecting data simultaneously with the occurrence of the event, without interfering with the occurrence of the event.

3.5.2. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

A focus group discussion involves gathering people from similar backgrounds or experiences together to discuss a specific topic of interest. It is a form of qualitative research where questions are asked about their perceptions attitudes, beliefs, opinion or ideas. In focus group discussion participants are free to talk with other group members; unlike other research methods it encourages discussions with other participants. It generally involves group interviewing in which a small group of usually 8 to 12 people. It is led by a moderator (interviewer) in a loosely structured discussion of various topics of interest.

3.5.3. Document analysis

Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic (Bowen, 2009).

Analyzing documents incorporates coding content into themes similar to how focus group or interview transcripts are analyzed (Bowen, 2009). In this regard, public records, personnel documents are entitled to be revised so as to obtain important data that support the assumption intended to get. Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning to the topic (Hansen, A., et al., 1998). Analyzing documents incorporate content into themes similar to how interview transcripts are analyzed.

So, the researcher critically examined documents to study the roles of public relations in managing crisis how effective their communication strategy was.

These documents were annual plans and reports, preliminary and final reports, ICAO Annexes and Manuals.

3.5.4. Past experience Personal Observation

Personal observation data collection instrument it is the oldest techniques of data collection and getting direct information. Data obtained through observation are more real and true than the data collected by any other method as it is based mainly on visual –audio scene.

Though, observation as data collection instrument has a limited scope for its use because all the events cannot be observed directly, it employs own experiences and it can establish cause-effect relationship (Pandey, 2015). It is therefore due to the researcher's virtue of proximity to the events happened that dare him to select personal observation as data collection instrument even though events cannot be observed at present.

3.6. Population and Sampling Technique

In this study, the researcher gathered data from in-depth interview with 4 public relations practitioners, 5 top management members, and two focus group participants in which one group had 5 members and the other one 6.

Therefore, the primary data is collected from In-depth interview and focus group discussion. And secondary data were collected from past experience personal observation and document analysis /annual plans and reports, preliminary and final accident investigation

reports as data collection instruments. Finally, by analyzing and interpreting the data collected from the authority, the paper attempt to draw conclusion and give recommendation on how Public relations plays its roles in managing crisis communication in Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority (ECAA)

CHAPTER FOUR

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results derived from the qualitative data analysis of the research. The qualitative aspect focuses on analysis and interpretation of themes and expressions of the selected cases.

I. In-depth interviews and focus group discussion

In-depth interviews (IdIs) are mostly long-duration, face-to-face, interviews conducted to achieve desired goals. In-depth interview also known as one-on-one is a method of extracting more detailed information or deep understanding of a subject or concept. In-depth interviews are one of the most efficient methods of collecting primary data. Unlike a simple questionnaire or rating scale, in-depth interview is conducted with an intention of uncovering in-depth details of interviewee's experience and perspective on a subject (Anne & Anna, 2008).

Whereas focus group discussion, is a form of qualitative research where questions are asked about their perceptions attitudes, beliefs, opinion or ideas. In focus group discussion participants are free to talk with other group members; unlike other research methods it encourages discussions with other participants.

1. Crisis management plan

The aviation industry is the safest mode of transport in the world. According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), more than 3.3 billion common travel safely by airline Company on 38.0 million flights. In 2014, the global accident rate was 0.23, concerning one accident for every 4.4 million flights and the lowest rate in history (Alnuaimi, 2015).

But when the accident happens, it is frustrating and ends up with humiliating effect like that of the accidents in Malaysia Aircraft in which the worst deadliest crash in history with 298 fatalities, in 2014. The accidents in Ethiopian Airlines in 1996 from 175 passengers and crew members 125 were perish in the Comoros Island. In 2010, 90 passengers and crew members were perished. In 2019, in Republic of Lebanon 90 passengers and crew member on board dead, due to aircraft accident on ET-302 B737 Max (800) 157 passengers and crew members

with no any survival were perished dead. Thus, the Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority must pay special attention to the prevention and risk neutralization via companywide crisis management plan.

According to Register & Larkin (2008), the Crisis Management Plan (CMP) is a documented plan detailing the actions the executives want to be taken when a crisis strikes the organization. Crisis management is about seizing the initiative – taking control of what has happened before it engulfs the organization.

Planning to manage crises and issues is the key to corporate survival (Register & Larkin, (2008). In relation to this, however, Mr.25 who participated in the individual in-depth interview on 6 may 2020 notes:

“The importance of crisis management plan is left unquestionable for all companies bet small or large, new or experienced it is. Moreover, from its very peculiar and sensitive natures, the aviation industry is more in need of developing full-fledged crisis management plan. However, the authority has not a documented crisis management plan that works in the authority level.”

In a similar manner, Mr. 46 who participated in the focus group discussion on 5 June 2020 expresses his view as follows:

“Although crisis management plan is critical, unfortunately we have not it yet. However, in the situational analysis, to prepare annual plans per year, threats expected hindering implementation and planned goals are identified. Accordingly, they are categorized as operational accidents like, mainly pilots and air traffic controllers strike, and natural threats like Volcanic eruption, Earth quick, COVID 19, H1N1, SARS virus and some other problems, which are out of the capacity of the authority like political disturbances in and out of the country. Thus, the authority always takes s proactive action for operational and reactive response for the natural one.”

According to Kathleen (2007), crisis management is a process of strategic planning for a crisis or negative turning point, a process that removes some of the risk and uncertainty from

the negative occurrence and thereby allows the organization to be in greater control of its own destiny.

Regarding this, however, Mr. 27 who participated in the individual in-depth interview on 6 May 2020 says:

“Although the authority has strategic plan to achieve its missions and emergency plan in technical departments that uses for day-to-day activities and mainly to safeguard employees that tells what they should do when an emergency arises, it has not a comprehensive company-wide crisis management plan (CMP).”

Crisis management plan is written document designed to meet its own specific objectives. According to Petrovici, (2014) crises management represents a set of factors designed particularly to prevent crises and reduce the damage to the organization and the audiences involved. Thus, as it has been widely depicted in literatures, crisis management plan predominantly consists the responsibilities of the executives of organization. Since crisis management plan contains crisis communication plan as one of its parts, it has irreplaceable role in managing crisis if company already has it. It benefits a company to prepare in the pre crisis stage, to combat during crisis and to rebuild reputation after crisis. Coombs & Holladay (2010), we should think of crisis management as a process with many parts, such as preventative measures, crisis management plans, and post-crisis evaluations.

Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority, who does have neither the crisis management plan nor crisis communication plan, has a national search and rescue committee. The national search and rescue committee is formed by experts from different ministries such as defence, health, federal police and other stakeholders in which public relations of ECAA is a member of the committee. The general director of ECAA is the chairperson of the committee. It gathered once a year or once in two years to pull resources. However, in this regard, Mr. 33 who participated in the individual in-depth interview on 8 May 2020 comments read as:

“If it were possible the chairperson of the committee would be at least the Deputy Prime Minister and the committee members were the

respective ministers. Moreover, under the ministers there would be directors /experts. It is what was ideally expected. In addition, if it were so, there would not to be any problem to assign/allocate resources. But, now the reality is different from what it to be expected. It is difficult especially for the chairperson, the general director of the ECAA because of his passion. It is impossible for him to claim or order for example the Ministry of Defence to send him an aircraft or two or he could not order the federal Police to assign him some number of police forces to ground an area and to conduct search and rescue. But if it had been the case that the members of the committee were ministers and the chairman is the deputy prime minister, it would be easy for him to order Ministers to do what is needed to be done.”

In this regard, Mr. 49 who participated in the focus group discussion on 5 June 2020 comments:

“I have a strong doubt to what extent this committee could function. Search and rescue teams in other countries are completely different from ours. They are permanent and strong. They are well equipped. They have their own resources. It is just they are institutions. However, in our case even the status of the committee members has its own problems. They are directors or experts those who do not have resources that they manage by themselves to order when the need comes for the purpose of search and rescue. It is really just nominal. But since it is one of the requirements of ICAO’ member states, it helps for ICAO audit consumption, to say comply when its presence enquired for.”

In the absence of both crisis management plan and crisis communication plan, it left difficult to public relations to play its role in managing crises.

Crisis communication plan (CCP) is part of a crisis management and public relations strategic plans. Brown and White (2011), one of the most important aspects of crisis management is communication. Communication is the process of meaningful interactions

among persons in an organization resulting in meanings being perceived and understanding effected among such persons (Davar, 1980)

According to Kathleen (2007), Crisis communications is the dialog between the organization and its public prior to, during, and after the negative occurrence. The dialog details strategies and tactics are designed to minimize damage to the image of the organization. Effective crisis management includes crisis communications that not only can alleviate or eliminate the crisis, but also can sometimes bring the organization a more positive reputation than it had before the crisis. In this regard, Mr. 44 who participated of the focus group discussion on 5 June 2020 says:

“Crisis communication plan is necessary not only to respond questions during and to repair reputations of the company after crises but it also benefits the company in gathering information to make decision how to manage the crisis in the future to come. CCP helps anticipate and prepare to prevent before crisis.”

Thus, the main goal of Crisis Communications Plan is to gather information, craft messages and disseminate it as quickly as possible before media disclose information obtained in their own way as breaking news. To be effective, a crisis communications plan therefore should identify strategies to be used in responding to the crisis and allow organizational message to reach stakeholders and the public at large.

Kathleen (2007) notes that whether an organization is a large multinational company or a small business, a crisis communications plan is needed. A crisis communications plan is preferably a part of a company-wide crisis management plan that would include sections on evacuation, work sites, equipment, and so on. If a company does not have a crisis management plan, a crisis communications plan is still advisable, even urgent. In light of this, Mr. 32 who participated in the individual in-depth interview on 9 May 2020 notes:

“Crisis communication plan is very important to handle media and manage the information released as much as possible. The presence CCP helps to aware and knows media who is the right sources of information

and responsible authorized body in giving information during accident/crisis.”

Similarly, Mr. 42 who participated in the focus group discussion on June 5 2020 further explains:

“Due to the absence of crisis communication plan and lack of awareness of the media, accident information always becomes uncontrolled and released at any corner that may in turn highly disturb stakeholders and particularly victims’ families. Presently, however, since there is an attempting to prepare CCP according with ICAO standards, it is better to develop it more and finalize to implement in order to alleviate challenges we have faced so far.”

According to literature, suggestions from in depth interviewees and focus group participants, crisis communication plan is not only important and necessary for the public relations but as it is part of crisis communication management plan it also be there in the authority level at large. Because it enables the Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority to take proactive measures against any potential crisis.

According to Coombs & Holladay (2010), crisis communication can be broadly defined as the collection, processing, and dissemination of information required to address a crisis. In pre-crisis, crisis communication revolves around collecting information about crisis risks, making decisions about how to manage potential crises, and training people who will be involved in the crisis management process.

Coombs & Holladay (2010), crisis communication has focused on the crisis category/crisis response – what organizations say and do after a crisis. Crisis responses are highly visible to stakeholders and very important to the effectiveness of the crisis management effort. For instance, improper crisis responses make the situation worse. It is by considering the breadth of crisis management that we will stretch the boundaries of what is studied in crisis communication.

2. Nature and system of information flow during crisis

As in all the aviation industry of the world particularly in crisis, information in Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority flows keeping its own designed organizational structure. Accordingly, when the aircraft disappeared from air traffic controllers' radar screen, it is air traffic controller unit that who knows first what is going on due to their direct interaction with pilots in flight. Then after doing all their best, air traffic controllers inform to Risk Control Center of Search and Rescue Directorate (SAR) of Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority. The Risk Control Center then starts make to aware all concerned bodies. It is well-defined and impressive structure for information exchange especially during crisis. In relation to this, Mr. 33 who participated in the individual in-depth interview on 9 May 2020 says:

“In the organizational structure of ECAA, the technical departments are interrelated based on their responsibility and accountability. In doing so, there would not be information interruption in the due process.”

3. past experiences of crisis management

II. Document Analysis

Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic (Bowen, 2009).

Under this topic, four crisis cases are identified in the due process of document analysis to show the impacts of absence of crisis management and crisis communication plans to prevent and respond crisis.

Case One: The Comoros Islands accidents of Boeing 767 in 1996,

On 23 November 1996, Ethiopian Airlines Flight No. 961, a Boeing 767-200 ER, registration ET-AIZ ditched in the Indian Ocean at Comoros Islands due to unlawful interference by the hijackers. The aircraft broke into four parts. There were 163 passengers and 12 crewmembers on board. Of the 175 occupants, 6 crewmembers and 119 passengers were fatally injured in the accident. Six crewmembers and 38 passengers sustained serious injuries,

two passengers sustained minor injuries and 4 passengers received no injury. The 175 passengers represented 34 different nationalities.

The Investigation Committee determines that the cause of this accident was unlawful interference by the hijackers, which resulted in loss of engines thrust due to fuel exhaustion.

The information presented here is extracted from the aircraft accident report by the Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority-Flight Safety Department (1998).

In the aircraft accident investigation report in May 04, 1998 on the Ethiopian airlines B767, revealed about efforts of Occurrence State, the state where the aircraft crashed, to the search and rescued as “the Comoros had never experienced such a disaster, had neither experience in this field nor any emergency response plan: the organization was simply that of meeting the needs of the moment.”

This report gives a big insight that how crisis management plan is pivotal not only in its pre crises phase to prevent but also to effectively respond during crisis as much as possible.

Case Two: The Lebanon Accident of B73-800 ET

The Boeing 737-800's fate was sealed, as was claimed variously at the time, by lightning strike, poor weather, mechanical failure, and loss of power, pilot error or even an onboard explosion. The doomed flight left Beirut's Rafik Hariri International Airport shortly after 2:20 a.m. local time, bound for the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, following a raging thunderstorm. Eyewitnesses interviewed on the morning of the crash suggested the plane had sunk in to the sea in flames following a bright flash of light.

Even though the final Investigation Report on the Accident to Ethiopian 409 – Boeing 737-800 Registration ET-ANB in Beirut – Lebanon submitted to Ethiopian Government Ministry of Transport on 17 January 2012 by His Excellency Mr. Ghazi El-Aridi, Minister of Public Works & Transportation says:

“The investigation revealed that the probable causes of the accident were the flight crew’s mismanagement of the aircraft’s speed, altitude, headings and attitude through inconsistent flight control inputs resulting in a loss of control and their failure to abide by CRM

principles of mutual support and calling deviations. The other contributory factors that could have lead to probable causes are the increased workload and stress levels that have most likely led to the captain's reaching a situation of loss of situational awareness similar to a subtle incapacitation and the F/O failure to recognize it or to intervene accordingly.'''

The information presented here is extracted from the aircraft accident report by the Ministry of Public Works & Transport of Republic of Lebanon (2010) to the Ministry of Transport of Ethiopian Government.

However, the news released by different bodies in different times were certainly confusing and different that Lebanese authorities were quick to rule out terrorism as a possible factor, although this has not silenced conspiracy theorists suggesting a bomb had been placed on board the jet before take-off. Two days after the crash, Transportation and Public Works Minister Ghazi Aridi suggested that the pilot had performed "a fast and strange turn" after take-off.

As The Daily Star Headline in English in January 2011 stated that Media reports in the immediate aftermath claimed that, the Boeing 737-800 had suffered a double lightning hit or had fallen from the sky after both engines stalled. One report, by Reuters, quoted a source within the investigation as saying that the crash had occurred due to pilot error after the co-pilot had failed to successfully engage the plane's autopilot in the minutes after takeoff.

The case here shows the absence or poor application of both crisis management and crisis communication plans in the aftermath of crisis.

Case three: The Ejere village of Boeing 737-800 (MAX) crisis,

''On March 10, 2019, at 05:38 UTC, Ethiopian Airlines flight 302, Boeing 737-800(MAX), ET-AVJ, took off from Addis Ababa Bole Int. Airport bound to Nairobi, Kenya Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. Shortly after takeoff, the Angle of Attack sensor recorded value became erroneous and the left stick shaker activated and remained active until near the end of the flight. In addition, the airspeed and altitude values from the left air data system began deviating from the corresponding right side values. Due to flight control problems, the Captain was unable to maintain the flight path and requested to return to the departure airport. The crew lost

control of the aircraft which crashed at 5: 44 UTC 28 NM South East of Addis Ababa near Ejere village.’’

The information presented here is extracted from the aircraft accident report by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Transport Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (2019).

In this case, the researcher wants to show how unmanaged sources of information channels and media disseminate intangible message to the public during crisis. As mentioned in the extracted information in preliminary investigation report, the cause of the accident revealed was completely different from what was explained in different media. In relation to ET-302 accident, Mr. 25 who participated in the individual in-depth interview on 6 May 2020 notes:

“Within a few minutes after the accident, different information was released from different sources. Different numbers of death tolls were posted in social media. Different social media released about the crisis including the causes of the accident before any investigation was conducted. Some social media posted the cause is ‘bombing’ and others posted the accident is due to hijacking.” The problems were not only to the media. Different actors also gave different information that in turn created confusion to the stakeholders particularly to family victims’ messages were not released in single channel. Thus, centralising of message during crisis is not a matter of choice but it is a must that the source of information channel need to be centralized.”

In similar manner, Mr. 41 who participated in the focus group discussion on 6 June 2020 remarks:

“Message has to have its own owner. If it were released by the public relations, possible case scenarios would be prepared before any accident. Therefore, when accident happened, public relations have to release the message by adjusting the scenario in line with the case. Even if

we could not do it so far, not only the rule of the ICAO but our rule and standard also ordered that message must be centralised. Now we are revising the manual and we should reach in common understanding with stakeholders including Ethiopian Airlines. Therefore, we have to centralise messages in any crisis case in the future to come”.

In similar manner, Mr. 45 who participated in the focus group discussion on 6 June 2020 explains:

“In the case of ET-302, B737-Max 800, the way we managed the information was very wrong. Unless message is centralized, we may be in more difficulties in the future than the past. It lets people to say what they only think and heard from somebody without any confirmation from responsible body. So message must be centralised and released very carefully that helps stabilise the public, particularly the victims’ families.”

Case four: Air Traffic Controllers Strike of 2018

In this case, the researcher is motivated to show is how information is released and disseminated differently even for the event announced before it happens. In this case, air traffic controllers announced why and how they strike. Nevertheless, different media were either posting or writing differently based on their own information sources or on their own preservation and understanding.’

4.1. Practices of public relations

4.1.1. General description

The public relations and promotion office of Ethiopia Civil Aviation Authority presently known as Communication Affairs Directorate, at present, has six staff members including the director. Among these, two of them are female and the rest 4 are male. It is one of the support processes in the organizational structure of Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority and a management member.

Though public relations of ECAA, is a management member, at present, predominantly plays the technician role, which represents the crafting side of public relations. Thus, it carries out activities such as collecting, analyzing and organizing data, drafting and constructing messages, writing, editing, taking photos, strengthening of internal and external relations, handling media relations and running special events, printing annual magazines, preparing press release and press conferences to promote and to build the image of ECAA. In this regard, Mr. 29 who participated in the individual in-depth interview on 8 May 2020 notes:

“Even though they have their own limitations, there is undeniable improvement on the side of public relations when we compare with public relations in the past. They have good relations with media to release information to promote the mission of authority. But they are not still strong mainly due to lack of adequate number of trained manpower, adequate budget and up to date trainings.”

In the light of this, Mr. 31 who participated in the individual in-depth interview on 9 May 2020 comments:

“As part of the organization public relation is very important. I know experts of public relations. They are energetic young experts including the head. They are strong enough to carry out their jobs. Personally, I need to see strong public relations in our organization. It is because public relations that acquaints the activities of our organization to stakeholders and the public at large. Thus, it should be given a due attention to do more than what they are doing. However, currently, after the change in government, things do not seem good for them. It really seems that all things went from bad to worst. It seems that their activities are restricted especially in relation with budget.”

Similarly, Mr. 50 who participated in the focus group discussion on 6 June 2020 claims:

“Information is very important that either it can make or break. Public relations should be strong to manage it. And it should have a media

management plan. However, to be functional and effective, it should be backed by the management. The management and government should have the commitment to support them. When budget allotted, it should not be said do this and do not do that. However, it was good if the budgets were allotted to them based on the weight and the necessity of jobs planned to do. Otherwise, for the sake of cost saving, the public relations should not be incapacitated and suffered with lack of budget in doing jobs. Otherwise, if things went as it is, I am afraid that they will do nothing.”

According to Henslowe (1999), public relations discipline is often either misunderstood or deliberately misinterpreted so that it is used in a pejorative way, associating it with propaganda, ‘economy of the truth’ or evasion.

Although there are differences in its magnitude the perception towards public relations is the same in many cases. There is of lack awareness and good understanding towards Public relations. In this regard, Mr. 28 who participated in the individual in-depth interview on 8 May 2020 notes:

“Even though there is a considerable improvement, public relation is not well understood by management and others staff members of ECAA. Nowadays there is a clear change in the area of public relations. Still there is lack of awareness about public relations. But it would be one of important parts of the authority if a fertile ground is paved and supported by the management and government.”

4.2. Role of Public Relations in Crisis Management

Even though media is very important even during crisis to announce the event to the public in order to make the community part of search and rescue, it is equally dangerous in damaging reputation of the organization sometimes more than or equal to the crisis if they are not handled properly. Nevertheless, to manage them properly, communication really matters. As communication is one of the crisis management tools, public relations can play its very important role to handle media during crisis using its crisis communication strategy.

According to Petrovici (2014), in crises, public relations are compulsory. The damages caused to the organization may be extremely serious unless a correct management of communication is taken into consideration, which, in such a situation, is more than necessary.

To make public relations effective in preventing pressures from media during and after crisis, it should own crisis communication strategy. Furthermore, public relations practitioners should be trained in crisis management. If it is so, public relations become proactive rather than reactive, it can prepare different templates for different news scenarios that would be arranged or modified as per the nature of the crisis. But if it is not trained in crisis management, public relations could not contribute its share in managing crisis. In relation to this, Mr. 26 who participated in the individual in-depth interview on 6 May 2020 notes:

“To be honest, regardless of their effort to carry out their jobs effectively at normal circumstances, at present our public relations is not ready for crisis management. They have not any training in this regard. It has not crisis communication plan. For example, there is emergency plan in technical departments and to some extent at the institution level. However, it does not incorporate the public relations. Had it not be the case, it is the right department to gather, analyse, organize, craft and construct message. Moreover, it is better than anybody else. Since it is their job and they are doing it for living, they know how to communicate with media, they know how to disseminated information. But they have to be trained in crisis management and they also get other important trainings that could build their capacity in terms of skills and knowledge. In addition, the crisis communications spokesperson will have to have been trained, tested, and exercised to cope with the news media and they must have a crisis communication plan, manuals and procedures.”

In similar manner, Mr. 42 who participated in the focus group discussion on 6 June 2020 remarks:

“In our case, there are a number of challenges that hinder public relations to manage crisis. There is no crisis management and crisis

communication plans. If we have well developed such plans, it was not be as such difficult for all of us. Because, since the plans by themselves set the responsibility of each actors, we would not be experiencing with wrong information/messages released at any corner that disturbed stakeholders, particularly victims' families. Apart from keenness of the media for crisis news, the absence of centralized information dissemination system is damaging. Uncontrolled message during crises might spark damage more than the crisis. In this regard, I do not think that our public relations experts have got crisis management training. Thus, let alone in the past, it is difficult for public relations to manage crisis at the moment.”

In light of this, Mr. 40 who participated in the focus group discussion on 6 June 2020 notes:

“Whatever the situations may be public relations is important everywhere. It is important for our organization. Even in crisis time, they can at least guide executives how to disseminate information. Since they have good relations with media, they can manage better than others. Furthermore, they know how information is collected, analysed, organized, drafted, constructed and finally disseminated to media. Thus, they can at least advise others in this regard.”

4.3. Message constructionon in crises

At any situation, message construction is the one of main functions of public relations. It gathers information, analyses, organizes and constructs message to disseminate it by itself or by the executives as it is necessary.

During crisis, public relations is responsible in drafting and constructing messages in different ways and approaches for media, stakeholders and the victims' families. In crisis, time messages should not be the same. It depends on the recipients of the message. Message constructed to the media never be resemble to the victims' families or stakeholders and vice versa. In crisis, public relations also should be wise and understand the environment not to hold

a message denying the reality left an open secret. If not, no one believes him/her again. In this case, Mr. 47 who participated in the focus group discussion on 6 May 2020 remarks:

“It is impossible to deny the crash and the death toll if once the aircraft has been crashed resulting in fatalities. However, it is equally impossible to tell the cause/s of the accident in associating with one or other similar cases before the final report of the investigation.”

Crisis message should be limited that able to assist the search and rescue process. It must be centralised to avoid confusion, inaccuracy and inconsistency to protect the images and reputation of its organization. It protects survivals families grieving. In this regard, Mr. 25 who participated in the individual in-depth interview on 6 May 2020 notes:

“It is obvious that whenever news about aircraft accident has been heard, no one has hoped to imagine the present of survivals. Nevertheless, according to some researches in ICAO, if search and rescue team reach within 2:00 hours from the accident area and take proper actions, 55% of the total passengers might survive. Thus, messages should be prepared and released vigilantly to save families of survivals from unnecessary grief.”

4.4. Public relation and media

Though public relations and media have their own objectives, they are interrelated and interdependent. They have symbiotic relationship. Media is likely dependent of public relations to get data or information either to write, post, or broadcast or to all. Public relations in its turn is likely dependant too on media channels to address its information to stakeholders, customers and the public at large either to promote its products or services, or to build and maintain or to repair reputation of its organization.

But in most cases, public relations and media do not trust each other. However, it is possible to create good relationship between them. It is natural that media always need information for their consumption. Public relations therefore, should provide them information during normal situations to create and maintain good relationship with media. It might be an indemnity for bad days of public relations.

According to Kathleen (2007), information about a crisis reaches publics through the media more than through any other means. An organization may have to work very hard to get the media's attention during normal times. In relation to this, Mr. 29 who participated in the individual in-depth interview on 8 May 2020 says:

“Public relations of ECAA has good relations with media. Whenever pr calls media, they always come and give media coverage. And most news and programs about Ethiopian Civil Aviation are positive.”

4.5. Challenges of public relations

Public relations practitioners help provide managers good information, which may be imperative for managers to make the right decisions. As many organizations in Ethiopia, public a relation in ECAA is also disregarded as an integral part of the organization. In the organizational structure of the authority it is found in the support process and even if, it lately becomes a management member.

In this regard, Mr. 43 who participated in the focus group discussion on 6 May 2020 says:

“Public relations are not well organized by trained manpower. And it does not get due consideration in budget, training and resources /facilities allocation. So they could not be influential in their practice.”

In relation to this, Mr. 30 who participated in the individual in-depth interview on 9 May 2020 also remarks:

“Despite the impressive improvement has been seen on the side of the public relations, the profession is highly misunderstood by managements and employees. There is lack of awareness about Public relations.”

CHAPTER FIVE

5. FINDINGS

By analyzing, the information from documents, depth interview and focus group discussion, the following findings are summarized as follows.

- Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority has a wide range of responsibilities in the air transport industry of Ethiopia. One of its mandates is the leading role in crisis management. However, the finding shows ECAA has not a documented written crisis management plan to play its roles. Besides its Public relations also does not have crisis communication plan as part of its strategic communication plan. They work only by their annual plan; which is not recommendable for effective crisis management.
- Aviation crisis is disastrous that need collective and coordinated effort to prevent, mitigate and restore. Among these actors a crisis management team is one of the very important bodies that lead the crisis management process. Thus, it is believed to be either strong permanent institution with its own resources or it would be a committee formed from higher official that capable to pull resources. Nevertheless, in ECAA, the national risk committee is formed by experts and the chairperson is the general director of the ECAA that makes things difficult to claim or order/ pull resources necessary for crisis events. In addition to this, the status of the committee members has its own problems. Beyond this, the role of public relations in crisis management has been insignificant either in disseminating information by its own or managing information in order to disseminate in one channel.
- The relationships between the technical departments are well designed based on their responsibility and accountability that keeps systematic flow of information from the first source of information to the end/other concerned bodies that does not let for information interruptions. Regardless of its well designed structure however, information is not centralized and in single channels during crisis time. Different actors gave different information that in turn created confusion to the stakeholders particularly

to victims' families. It might also be resulted in more organisational crisis than the crisis event.

- The role of public relations in crafting and disseminating message is minimal.
- Practices of public relations are not strong mainly due to lack of adequate number of trained work force, adequate budget and up to date trainings.

CHAPTER SIX

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter is aiming at drawing a significant conclusion. And propose effective recommendations inspired by the critical analysis of the findings and in-depth review of the literature review.

6.1. Conclusion

The purpose of the study has been to examine the role public relations in crisis management in the case of Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority. It employed individual in-depth interview, focus group discussion and personal past experience observation as data collection instruments. The study aimed at assessing the role of public relations in crisis management in the case of Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority. As the study focused on the implementation of crisis management, it assessed the gap between the aviation or ICAO standards and the practices with the hope to make some recommendations.

Ethiopian Civil Aviation authority is a regulatory body mandated to regulate air transport industry in Ethiopia. As representative of the state of Ethiopia, and also accountable to the International Civil Aviation Organization, it handles the function of search and rescue based on the Chicago convention of ICAO article 25, which it states that search and rescue is a function of states in whatever the case an aircraft distress in its territory.

In doing so it plays the role of air navigation, technical and economic regulation as its regular activities to develop domestic and international air transportation networks and to ensure a reliable, sustainable, highly secure and safe air transport system in Ethiopia. Moreover, it is authorized to implement and enforce laws, regulations and directives relating to civil aviation as well as treaties to which Ethiopia is a party. As other departments, its public relations are believed to be a crucial department in promoting, creating and maintaining good relations with its publics. In this challenging and competitive world the importance of public relations has become more decisive particularly in crisis time.

However, regardless of its responsibilities and efforts, the research finding shows that ECAA lacks clear preventive, mitigating and restorative plans, which is commonly known as crisis management plan.

Furthermore, the absence of crisis communication plan as part of communication strategy in public relations department entails that the role of public relations in crisis management is insignificant that calls measures to be taken to realize its roles in this regard.

In real sense, the public relations of ECAA are important that currently shows a progressive improvement in promoting to ECAA's mission. However, it is necessary to strengthen public relations to coup up the challenges it has been faced.

As a management member, public relations of ECAA have become advantageous in getting firsthand information than before. However, in spite of the fact that developments have been seen towards Public relations, there are still challenges that make public relations incapable to do strategically. Lack of adequate trained staffs, budget, facilities and training including in crisis management are some to monition that have been challenging public relations to play its role effectively and efficiently. It might be either due misunderstood or misinterpretation. Hence, its engagement is now more in common routine activities of preparing news release, magazines, brochures, event and the like.

The other problem what the research revealed is the triviality of National Search and Rescue Committee due to the status of its members being they are all experts or somewhat directors, in spite of the fact that the composition of the members of the committee is applicable. Because of the position, they could not pull resources during crisis.

On the other hand, regardless of its well designed organizational structure, information in ECAA is not centralized and in single channel during crisis time. Different actors gave different information that in turn created confusion to the stakeholders particularly to victims' families. It might also be resulted in more organisational crisis than the crisis event. Thus, unless information and media have been managed properly, in the era of social media, it becomes more difficult than ever. It is not the stakeholders or operators but the responsibility of ECAA to announce or to release/disseminate information to the media during aviation crisis.

6.2. Recommendation

The researcher has given the below recommendations on the basis of the findings and conclusion.

- The Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority needs to develop crisis management plan by evaluating the major crisis management they have been experiencing.
- As communication is a tool to manage crisis, public relations need to have crisis communication strategy approved by the management of Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority. Crisis communication enables an organization to respond appropriately in order to maintain public confidence and minimize the damage (Ray, 1999).
- Even though, the composition of members of the National Search and Rescue Committee is appropriate, it could not be functional due to their status being experts. Thus, it should be an independent permanent entity that could have its own resources to manage its responsibilities of search and rescue. If not the national Search and Rescue Committee should be reestablished from respective ministers and guided at least by the Deputy Prime Minister.
- To make public relations more functional and to play its role in crisis management, it should be strengthened in all aspects of its endeavors. And it should get up to date trainings including crisis management training to build its capacity.
- Public relations should get a due attention in terms of budget, training, adequate qualified manpower. It has to get good understanding by the management and employees.
- Public relations should devise a media management strategy as part of crisis communication strategy so as to manages media properly whether in crisis or at any normal times.
- To avoid confusion, inconsistency, inaccuracy and incredibility, centralizing and channeling information in one channel is not a matter of choice but it is a must that has been done during crisis. Since centralized information is released with best knowledge of the crisis communication team and the public relation head who is certainly be the chairperson of the team, it would give the chance to soothe the public particularly the victims' families. Otherwise, it might be resulted in more damage than the crisis event itself.

REFERENCES

- AASHISH PAHWA, Marketing essentials, retrieved from <https://www.feedough.com/what-is-public-relations-pr-functions-types-examples/> [2019: August 17]
- AIRPORT SERVICES MANUAL: Doc 9137-AN/898 Part 73.18 PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER 3.18.1
- Alison Theaker (2001), The Public Relation Handbook, published by Routledge
- Alnuaimi Qussay A B. (2015), Aviation Accidents: CRM to Maintaining the Share of Airlines Case Study on accidents Airlines in China, Journal of Education and Practice
www.iiste.org ISSN 2222-1735 (Paper) ISSN 2222-288X (Online) Vol.6, No.30, 2015)
- Alzahrani Fahad (2016), The Role of Public Relations in Organizational Crisis Management: International Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research, Volume 7, Issue 1, January-
- Anne Adams, and Anna L. Cox, (2008). Questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus groups. In: Cairns, Paul and Cox, Anna L. eds., Research Methods for Human Computer Interaction. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp. 17–34.
- Anthonissen Peter Frans, (2008) Crisis Communication, practical PR strategy for reputation: management and company survival:Printed 2008 by Kogan Page Limited
- Atieno Ochieng Pamela (2009). Problems of education in the 21st century Volume 13, 2009, An analysis of the strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative research paradigms, MasindeMuliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya
- Bakos Levente (2017), SIM 2017 / 14th International Symposium in Management Crisis Management Between Public Relations and the Holonic Multi-Agent Approach:
- Banik (2002), Effective public relations in public and private sector.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. Qualitative Research Journal, 9(2), 27-40. doi:10.3316/QRJ0902027

Brown Kenon A. & White Candace L. (2011), Organization–Public Relationships and Crisis Response Strategies: Impact on Attribution of Responsibility: Journal of Public Relations Research, Department of Advertising and Public Relations, University of Alabama and School of Advertising and Public Relations, University of Tennessee

Bussey. C. (2011), Brilliant PR. Harlow. England: Pearson.

Campbell, J. (1982), What to Study, Generating and Developing Research Questions. Beverly Hill: Sage Publisher. For Research design

Coombs, W. T. (2007), Attribution theory as a guide for post-crisis communication research. Public Relations Review, 33, 135–139.

Coombs, W. Timothy (2015), Ongoing crisis communication: planning, managing, and responding / by SAGE, publications, Inc. University of Central Florida. -Fourth edition.

Coombs W. Timothy and Holladay Sherry J. (2010), The Handbook of Crisis Communication, A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication

Creswell JW, Plano Clark VL (2011), Designing and conducting mixed methods research. 2nd Sage; Thousand Oaks, CA:. [Google Scholar] /Methodology

Creswell, J. W. & Plano Clark. V. L. (2007), Designing and conducting mixed methods research. Thousand Oaks. CA: Sage

Cutlip, S., Center, A., & Broom, G. (2006), Effective Public Relations (9th ed.). Upper Saddle, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Dahman, T. (2008), Communication strategies in times of crisis: University of Pretoria.

Davar, R.S. (1980), Principles of Management, Bombay. Progressive corporation Pvt. Ltd.

Devlin, Edward S. (2007) Crisis Management Planning and Execution: Published by Auerbach Publications by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC,

- Fapohunda, Tinuke. M. (2013), Towards Effective Team Building in the Workplace:
Department of Industrial Relations and Public Administration Lagos State University
Ojo. Nigeria, International Journal of Education and Research Vol. 1 No. 4,
- Fink, S. (2000), Crisis Management: Planning for the Inevitable. New New York, NY: AMAC
OM American Management Association.
- Grunig James E. (2001), The Role of Public Relations in Management and Its Contribution to
Organizational and Societal Effectiveness: Professor of Public Relations Department of
Communication, University of Maryland College Park, Maryland 20742 USA, Speech
delivered in Taipei, Taiwan, May 12, 2001
- Hansen, A., et al. (1998), Mass Communication Research Methods, London: Macmillan
- Harlow, R.F. (1976). 'Building a dentition of public relations: Public Relations Review 2(4).
- HarwatL usiaNeti (2013, Crisis management: Determing Specific Strategies and leadership
Style for Effective Outcome, Asian Journal of Management Science and Education,
Vol. 2 No. 2
- Hough Michelle G, Crisis Planning: Increasing Effectiveness, Decreasing Discomfort
Pennsylvania State University, McKeesport Campus John E. Spillan, and Pennsylvania
State University, DuBois Campus, Journal of Business & Economics Research – April
2005 Vol. 3, No. 4
- ICAO Crisis Management Framework, Document (EUR Doc 031) -First Edition- 2014)
- Kathleen Fearn-Banks (2007), Crisis Communications: A Casebook Approach, Third Edition
University of Washington, LAWRENCE ERLBAUM ASSOCIATES, PUBLISHERS
Mahwah, New Jersey London.
- Khaled Zamoum and Tevhide Serra Gorpe (2018), Crisis management: Looking back and
looking ahead. Presented at: The Crisis Management Conference: Athena: Organized
by the Hellenic Ministry of National Defense. 2008. Retrieved February 25, 2016,
from: www.ifpa.org/pdf/athena_08.pdf

Kothari C.R, 2020), Research Methodology, methods and techniques: New age international publisher.

Lecturer School of Humanities and Social Science South Eastern Kenya University

International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Vol. 3 No. 7; April 2013P.O.

Box 170-90200 Kitui Kenya.

McMillan, J. H. & Schumacher, S. (1993), Research in education: A conceptual understanding. New York: Harper Collins.

Michelle G. Hough, & Campus John E. Spillan, (2005), Crisis Planning: Increasing Effectiveness, Decreasing Discomfort, Pennsylvania State University, Journal of Business & Economics Research, (P-20), Volume 3, Number 4

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994), Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook. Sage.

Nwosu, I. (1996), Public Relations Management Issue and Application: Dominican Publication.

Nayak Satyendra (2013), The Global Financial Crisis Genesis, Policy Response and Road Ahead Springer India

Open Soccer Center: The Daily Star Headline in English (2011), The GMP20110121644008 Beirut; The Daily Star Online in English 0222 GMT 21 Jan 11 ["2010 Ethiopian Crash Answers Still Elusive"]

Pandey Prabhat & Pandey Mishra (2015) RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES, published by Bridge Center printed in Romania First,

Patton MQ. Qualitative research and evaluation methods, 3rd Sage Publications; Thousand Oaks, CA: 2002. [Google Scholar]/ Methodology

Petrovici Amalia (2014), PR in Crisis Situations. A Case Study: University of Bacău, Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of LUMEN

Ralph Tench and Liz Yeomans (2009, p.-386), Exploring Public Relations: Pearson Education Limited, 2009, Second Edition

Pandey Prabhat & Pandey Mishra (2015) RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES, published by Bridge Center printed in Romania First,

Regester Michael & Larkin Judy (2008) Risk Issues and Crisis Management in Public Relations: A Casebook of Best Practice Edition, KOGAN PAGE, London and Philadelphia

Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., & Elam, G. (2003). Designing and selecting samples. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers (pp. 77–108). London: Sage.

Seitel Fraser P. (2017), The Practice of Public Relations, Managing Partner, Emerald Partners Adjunct Professor, New York University: Thirteenth edition, published by Pearson Education Limited

SIM 2017/ Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, ClujNapoca, Romania Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Sibiu, Romania

TekinÖmerFaruk (2014) WEI International Academic Conference Proceedings Budapest, Hungary

Theaker Alison (2004), The Public Relations Handbook: Second edition published by Taylor & Francis Group

Ulmer, R. R., Sellnow, T. L., & Seeger, M. W. (2007), Effective crisis communication. Thousand Oakes: Sage Publications

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/jel.v6n1p102> , MdShidur Rahman Online Published: November 10, 2016 No.6

Walnut Creek (2002), [Google Scholar] If the need comes b/c not clear as sited and Spradley JP: The ethnographic interview, Holt, Rinehart & Winston; New York: 1979. [Google

Scholar Bernard HR. Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches. 3rd Alta Mira Press;]

Waryjas Maryann a 1999, EFFECTIVE CRISIS MANAGEMENT: Grace Under Pressure,
Katten Muchin Rosenman

Wekesa Allan Siangu (2013), Analysis of Team Effectiveness in Crisis Communication,
School of Humanities and Social Science South Eastern Kenya University:
International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Vol. 3 No. 7; April 2013

Wimmer, R. D. & Dominick, J. R. (2003), Mass media research: An introduction. CA:
Wadsworth Publishing.

Appendix:

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LINE MANAGERS, PUBLIC RELATIONS AND EMPLOYEES AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LINE MANAGERS

1. Does ECAA/ Authority have communication strategic plan?
2. Does ECAA/ Authority have Crises/Emergency management plan?
3. How do you evaluate public relation practices during crisis?
4. What are your responsibilities in message constructing during crises?
5. How crises were managed in the past?
6. What is your strategy of info flow system during crises?
7. How is information released to media?

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LINE PUBLIC RELATIONS

1. Does the Authority have communication strategic plan?
2. Does ECAA have Crises/Emergency management plan?
3. How the management understand crises management plans?
4. What is your role during crises in the organization?
5. What are your responsibilities in message constructing during crises?
6. How messages were clearly crafted for media?
7. How messages were clearly crafted for stakeholders?
8. How messages were clearly crafted for victims?

9. What communication channels do you frequently use for media?
10. What communication channels do you frequently use for Stakeholders?
11. What communication channels do you frequently use for victims?
12. How crises were managed in the past?

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LINE EMPLOYEES

1. Do have information as ECAA has been guided by communication strategic plan?
2. Do you think that ECAA manage a Crises/Emergency based on crisis management plan?
3. What is your role during crises in the organization?
4. How crises were managed in the past?