

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**PUBLIC RELATIONS EXCELLENCE
IN CRISIS COMMUNICATION
MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY IN
TENAGA NASIONAL BERHAD**

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ABSTRACT

Contributions by government-linked companies (GLCs) to national development once threatened by multiple types of crises, which have the probability of tarnishing reputation and stakeholders' trust. This study aims to investigate the significance of public relations excellence in managing crisis communication in Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB), an organisation involved in the Government Linked Company Transformation Program (GLCTP) to deliver high performance. TNB has experienced several crises since its establishment. The objectives of this study are to examine what is management's acceptance of public relations empowerment in crisis management, to explain the strategic management approach in crisis communication management by the Corporate Communication Department, to assess the effectiveness of crisis communication in TNB through a comparison of organisational response to stakeholder reactions and to recommend the best practices of crisis communication management in TNB. This study analyses the crisis communication process in TNB and will be a reference to develop strategic crisis communication planning in organisations in Malaysia, especially GLCs. This study is an intrinsic case study to better understand a particular case in its world context (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000 & Yin, 2011). It focuses on selected generic characteristics of the Excellence Theory (Grunig, 1992) to study public relations practice in crisis communication management. Herrero-Gonzalez and Pratt's (1996) Integrated Symmetrical model is applied as a theoretical framework for crisis communication management. The model underlies the application of issues management, the Situational Theory of Publics (Grunig & Repper, 1992) and symmetrical communication (Grunig, 1992) in managing crisis communication at different phases of a crisis: issues management, planning and prevention, during crisis and post-crisis. Information was collected through a triangulation of methods and sources including face-to-face interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis. Three levels of coding also were applied - open, axial and selected - to establish patterns through thematic analysis. Public relations in TNB's crisis communication management face three challenges. First, how TNB's management accepts and understands about communication determines the direction of public relations role and function in crisis management. Second, public relations competency is required to establish strategic communication planning in crisis communication management. Third, analysis of stakeholder reactions post-crisis showed that TNB is reliable in its supply of electricity but dissatisfied on issues pertaining to trustworthiness, complaints, performance and expectations of TNB. In an increasingly challenging environment, comprehensive crisis communication management that encompasses strategic management of public relations in TNB is compulsory to thrive for balance in business and human development.

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Verily with every hardship there is ease (Al-Inshirah 94:6).
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