Strategic Crisis Management Approaches and Sustainable Development: The Jalingo Experience

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Abstract

Globally, crisis occurs daily. It is essential that leaders study internal and external factors responsible for crisis situations and to identify organizational strategies for preventing and managing crises whenever they do occur. It is a strategic imperative to understand what crisis situations are and their causes as well as how to strategically and tactically manage and prevent them. Crisis can occur in small or large organizations and at different levels within them. With increased globalization and extended relationships, the effects of crises are felt worldwide. Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany informs that, Peace is accordingly one of the central pillars of the 2030 Agenda, the centerpiece of the International Community's efforts under the United Nations auspices to foster worldwide sustainable development. The various crises around the world are of concern to the International community because approximately 1.5 billion people live in unstable political environment in countries torn by violence. Armed conflicts cause immeasurable suffering, set countries and entire regions many years back economically and impede development. Brandt, states that "Peace is not everything, but everything is nothing without peace." The main thrust of this paper is to examine the various crises management theories and approaches. It highlights the importance of early identification and management of crises and issues, which in return are strongly intertwined with a fundamental positive internal communal climate, and make for sustainable development. The paper proffers some solutions for effective crisis management and resolution.

Keywords: Actors, Concepts, Crisis, Crisis Management, Sustainable Development and Theories

Introduction

The human society is today witnessing multiple serious crises which cut across economic, social, and environmental spheres of life. Very worrisomely, the crises have devastating consequences on lives, property and displacement of millions of people. Infact, most of such conflicts could have been avoided if the parties involved embraced dialogue over intolerance and extremism.

The term crisis carries many meanings in itself. These meanings guide managers and leaders in managing particular crisis situations. This is because each crisis situation is very unique by itself. Notwithstanding the diverse perceptions about what constitutes a crisis situation, it is generally agreed by scholars that all crises situations share six characteristics. A crisis could start out by a simple piece of news being disseminated through media outlets or social networks, then find recipients at large, which leads to the state of agitation and uncertainty within the target of the crisis (Heath, 2010). Crisis involves a period of discontinuity, a situation where the core values of the organization/ system are under threat and this requires critical decision making (Kayes and Allen, 2012). The solution against any crisis begins initially with fighting its causes, such as dealing efficiently with the sources of rumors and false news including via social media… (Simola, 2014).

Crisis situations abound around the world, and most especially in the developing societies of Africa where, arguably, there may be no laid down policy guide lines for crisis management, thus, more often than not, a significant part of crisis management is left to government, (deploying troops to keep the peace), with no lasting success. The emergencies and man-made disasters have continued to take their toll stretching the scarce resources of government and relevant relief agencies. This study therefore, conceptually examined crisis, crisis management, and sustainable development, exploring the efficacy of knowledge based and practical skills responses to these emergencies.

Clarification of Concepts

Concept of Crisis

Hermann (1972) argues that a crisis is a "situation that incorporates the following three conditions (a) a surprise (b) a threat to high - priority goals, and (c) a restricted amount of time available for responses" (As cited in Choi and Kim, 2010). A crisis is an extreme situation of conflict, which has reached a turning point, where critical decisions have to be taken or else the conflict escalates to a point of extreme violence. Sometimes, a crisis is a degenerated state of conflict, where threats to human security, intense violence characterized by fighting, death, injury, large scale displacement of populations etc., occur, (Best, 2007). Dayton (2004) states that the: "modern crisis does not recognize or respect national borders; it thrives on fragmentation and variety… it does not confine itself to a particular policy area; it jumps from one field to another, unearthing issues and recombining them into unforeseen mega threats… the modern crisis is not boxed in by set dates that mark a clear beginning and ending: it is an embedded vulnerability that emerges, fades, mutates, and strikes again." Dayton's (2004) statement perfectly exemplifies what a crisis is. It is chaos. There is no warning when it happens, and there are very few indicators for the different forms of businesses or groups worldwide. There are no limitations to how big or small crises are. The complexity and capriciousness of the current business environment can create crisis situations that impact organizations and their stakeholders. A crisis disrupts business operations, threatens to harm people, damages your reputation, and negatively impact your finances (Sickler, 2018).

Crisis Management and Sustainable Development

Crisis management is defined as a series of steps performed by an organization to deal with a catastrophic event. Crisis management is a proactive process which involves dealing with the crisis before it happens, during the crisis and aftermath (Sickler, 2018; Coombs 2012). Crisis management is a process designed to prevent or lessen the damage a crisis can inflict on an organization and its stakeholders. Crisis management is a process with many parts and one of the crisis management models is explained as a three -stage process by (Coombs, 2012). The pre-crisis stage consists of three sub stages: signal detection, prevention and crisis preparation. The second stage is the crisis stage itself, and this stage is formed by two sub stages, which are crisis recognition and crisis containment. The post crisis stage, as the name suggests, comes after crisis is resolved. At this stage, the organization evaluates how it will deal with the crisis.

Communication is a key component to organizational success in dealing with crisis situations or events. The study conducted by Johansen (2011), and cited by Aggerholm and Frandsen (2012), states that "the vast majority of organizations have a crisis or contingency plan, and most of these plans contain an internal dimension relating to the management and communication with the internal stakeholders during a crisis. A crisis situation creates need for information and that need is fulfilled with communication. Neither the crisis management plan nor the crisis communication before, during and after a crisis should be ignored. Crisis communication model addresses both internal and external audiences affected by the crisis situation. It provides information and that information is supposed to be consistent throughout

the crisis situation with the designation of one primary spokesperson (Lando, 2014). Coombs (2009) differentiates between two types of crisis communication: "crisis knowledge management" and "stakeholder holder reaction management." This may be accomplished through words or what is done, the deed. It is important to understand the perception of the stakeholders' groups of the crisis situation, the organization under crisis and its response to the crisis to influence them. To effectively manage crisis, the managers have to define crisis and its linked fields such as natural disasters. However, crisis management deals mainly with man-made or human caused crisis (Kayes, 2012). This is because disasters and crisis do not mean the same thing even though crisis management may also take place in disaster situations because crisis can be embedded in disaster and poor disaster management can result in crisis for the agencies responsible for dealing with it.

During the past 20 years, business and government entities have geared up efforts at sustainable development. With a focus on growing the economy, while maintaining the integrity and resources of the environment, the well-being of all levels of societies is ascertained, also securing future generations. Occasionally, however, a crisis occurs that has ramifications for the environment as well as business, government and society. Crisis events are acute occurrences, but can have long-term effects on the environment as well as policy implications for business and government. The field of crisis management seeks to minimize the occurrence of these crisis events and mitigate the ones that do occur (Coombs, 2006; Pearson and Clair, 1998). Sustainable development addresses a large macro level and does not necessarily focus on any one particular event. It is more of a philosophy on how to sustain the environment while promoting economic growth (Stead and Stead, 2004). There is very appreciable relationship between crisis management and sustainable development.

The Actors in Crisis Management
More often than not, a significant part of crisis management is left to government. This is because communication is threatened, and often disrupted. It is only until communication is restored through normalcy, that parties may resume their usual activities. In the maintenance of crisis situations, many ugly situations have happened in Africa. Sometimes, crisis have consumed the state and led to state collapse, as evident in the cases of Somalia, Rwanda, Liberia and Sierra Leone (Best, 2007), and Ife-Modakeke, Tiv-Jukun of Nigeria. The necessary agencies used by government to maintain law and order are the army and other paramilitary agencies like the Police. The introduction of the police and other law enforcement agencies may call for the use of extraordinary measures, including force, to restore law and order. This could however, further lead to human rights violations of various descriptions.

Crisis management is a multi-track approach to peace. Just as there are many different methods of settling conflicts, there are also different stakeholders and participants in the conflict management spectrum. As opined by Louise Diamond and John McDonald (1996) cited in (Best, 2007), the Multi-track Diplomacy as a systems approach introduces us to peace. They believe there are at least nine tracks of conceptual and practical framework that assist and work in the peace building sector. There are also traditional African processes of resolving disputes. This can be institutional means in local settings such as elders' councils. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940) cited in Otite (2007) demonstrated that, conflict resolution in non-western societies is not necessarily identified with political offices. Nader (1968) cited in Otite (2007), points out in this connection that other means or agents of resolving or regulating conflicts in indigenous "stateless" societies include the diviner, shaman, chief priests, and headmen, as well as town or village councils.

Crisis Management Theories

The theoretical framework of crisis management approaches has been reflected in many studies. The popular theories that are applied in researches are situational crisis communication theory, issue and crisis management theory, image restoration theory, apology theory, attribution theory etc. However, the most commonly mentioned theory is the situational crisis communication theory. The situational crisis communication theory proposed by Coombs and Holladay is an extension of the attribution theory. The underlying idea behind SCCT is that corporations should strategically respond to a crisis situation based on an understanding of how the public attributes more responsibility to an organization and vice versa. SSCT is used to test different crisis response strategies. SSCT is audience-oriented theory which is still developing.

Findings of the Study

Multi-track approach for preventing or limiting the destructive impacts of crisis in Jalingo Local Government Area.

The findings of the study showed an upsurge in incidences of crisis events in Jalingo Local Government Area and its suburbs, as media reports for the year 2019 were replete with news of this human emergency, and attendant toll on human lives, destruction of houses, farmlands and produce, businesses, sources of livelihood and, other economic activities. This view is given impetus as shown by the results obtained from a sample of media and other reports. According to Tvcnews (2019, May 9), 12 persons were killed in farmers/herders clash in Jalingo. Again, in 2019, May 8, herdsmen butchered 11 in reprisal attack in Abbare villages of Ardo Kola and Jalingo Local Government Areas as reported by Sahara Reporters. Similarly, in 2019, June 1, 51 were killed in herdsmen /farmers crisis as reported by The Nation. According to Punch (2019, July 13), 64 persons were reportedly killed in Ardo Kola and Jalingo Local Government Areas on, while Ajakaye (2019) reported that, 6 persons were killed in fresh herder violence in Nigeria's Taraba.

It can be argued that a situation where crises erupt almost on a monthly basis, portend dire consequences for society, and has great implication for sustainable development. According to a Catholic Priest, Reverend Father Cyriacus Kamai, 51 people were killed in 11 villages of Ardo Kola Local Government Area and suburbs of the State Capital, with 8,494 persons displaced. The Cleric said the situation prompted his visiting President Muhammadu Buhari. In the same vein the traditional ruler of Kona, Augustine Njenmang appealed to the State and Federal Government to rehabilitate victims of the farmers/herders crisis in Ardo Kola and Jalingo Local Government Area of the State. He lamented on the devastation occasioned by the crisis, resulting in people living in deplorable conditions in Internally Displaced Persons Camps, while the siege on their communities will lead to impending food crisis. He stated that people want to go back and continue with their economic activities, but the attackers were still killing them. The Chief concluded thus, "Development can only be achieved in an atmosphere of peace, so we must give peace a chance." He appealed both to National Emergency Management Agency for relief materials, and the Federal Government for security.

This situation in Ardo Kola and Jalingo Local Government Areas are documented by the Permanent Secretary, Taraba State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), as shown in the Table 1:

Table 1. Distribution of person affected by Conflict in Jalingo and environs

S/N	Location Of IDPs	Numerical Strength	Camps And Affected Communities
1.	Ardo –Kola LGA	5,780	Karim, Lazai, Garin Bako, Seyawa, Murbai, Sobai,Jekunuhuo and Jengai
2.	Jalingo LGA	24,807	Kona, Gulum, Nukkai,Muslims Council, ATC Kofai, Jauro Gbadi, Mayo-Dassa, EYN Church Abuja Phase 11, Yelwa Abari, Mayo-Gwoi, Turaki Barade, Majidadi, Sarkin-Dawaki, Sintali, Ndaga, Semporo, Murkini, Yawai,Jekynuhou, Sembe, Kuri Janiban, Kondodi, Yankani, Yaurewate, Murtai,Yauwani and Sarkin Yamma

Source: SEMA Taraba State Crisis Situation Document 2019

The figure given for IDPs in Ardo Kola LGA is 5,780, while their Camps and Communities affected are 8. The figure for Jalingo LGA is 24,807, and affected Communities and Camps are 27. This scenario is very worrisome because the government, both State and Federal, with the relevant agencies continue to use the same strategy of keeping the peace, rather than peace building. There must be a determination to employ a multi-track approach to resolve, manage, and transform conflict using a practical problem- solving approach in stemming crises. Therefore, the necessity of dealing with quick solutions would be of secondary importance, as focus is placed on the overall conflict process (Otite, 2007).

The government must exert the needed political will to bring about an end to farmers/herders crisis in Jalingo local government area of Taraba State, and indeed the entire Nigerian State. It does not call for blame trading, or making some whimsical political statements that may portend favoritism of a group in the crisis, a case in point being a statement credited to the Special Adviser to the President on Media and Publicity Chief Femi Adesina on African Independent Television program where he is quoted as saying, "Giving land for ranching is better than death." Better alive than a dead land owner" (Vanguard News 2018). To any discerning mind, such statement emanating from the Presidency will only lead to one opinion that, there is a lack of government's resolve to deal with the herders /farmers conflict.

Conclusion

Examples of different types of crises are identifiable, with associated factors propelling the crises such as economic, social, environmental, political, security and resource variables. These phenomena have ramifications for the environment as well as business, government and society. Crisis events can deplete resources needed for future generations, ultimately hindering efforts at development. It is therefore vital to apply professional and academic knowledge of crisis management to mitigate damage and incur less consequences in any given crisis situation. It is equally expedient to also explore the link between crisis management and sustainable development with a view to integrating the two variables.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the crisis, the following measures are recommended for effective crisis management: Multi-facetted efforts are necessary for management of crisis of this nature, which should be predicated on evolving a deliberate pre-emptive policy for avoiding conflicts. Efforts at timely and permanent resettlement and reintegration of the displaced persons and victims of the crisis to their respective communities. The need to improve governance and security at the grassroots level to forestall individuals taking laws into their hands at the slightest provocation. Again, the village and ward heads in communities should be sensitized to mobilize their people to shun all forms of violence in any situation. Depending on the perspectives of conflict, Government, peace and conflict practitioners, should use the indigenous, modern western, and mixed procedures and processes for crisis management. The Government should be prepared to collaborate with non-governmental

organizations (NGOs) to intervene promptly in resolving conflicts. The training and functions of the community based organizations (CBOs) should also be part of the programme. The media to uphold the principles of peace journalism and peace building, which is necessary for growth and development. This is because the media through its coverage of conflicts can deliberately or inadvertently promote conflicts as well as encourage peace in order to 'reduce human suffering, and increase human happiness.'

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