EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF CRISIS RESPONSE STRATEGIES ON
STAKEHOLDER’S PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL REPUTATION:
A CASE OF NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY MIRACLE JUNCTION
CULTISM CRISIS

BY

CHIWETA-ODUAH ONYINYE

A Thesis Submitted to the School of Communication, Cinematic & Creative Arts
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in
Communication Studies

UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY–AFRICA

Summer 2019
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Summer 2019
Student’s Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college, institution or university other than the United States International University in Nairobi for academic credit.

Signed:.......................................................... Date:........................................

Chiweta-Oduah Onyinye (ID No 652822)
Approval Page

This project has been presented for examination with my approval as the appointed supervisor.

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Robi Koki Ochieng
Supervisor

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Chair of the Department,
Communication Department

Signed: ___________________________ Date: ________________
Prof. Valarie Adema, Ph.D.,
Dean, School of Science and Technology
Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge my supervisor, Madam Robi Koki Ochieng for her undiluted support, as well as the School of Communication, Cinematic and Creative Arts for their efforts in helping to mold me. I will forever be grateful for the academic guidance and support. Every minute, hour, and days spent in this institution is well appreciated. Thank you all.
Dedication

The researcher dedicates this project to God. Almighty for His uncountable blessings and favour towards me and the completion of this project. I owe it all to Him.

This research project is also dedicated to my jewel of inestimable value (rare gem) Prof. Carol Arinze-Umobi who fought tirelessly to ensure that I got to this point, to my amazing, caring and loving husband, wonderful and precious kids, Emmanuella, Elvina and Arinzechukwu, life and education would have been meaningless without you all, the stress and worries and sleepless nights you guys gave me made me stronger and I love you all unconditionally.

To my wonderful Siblings, Somtoo, Gold, Nelson, words are not enough to express what you all mean to me. I Love you all, thanks a bunch. To my super-duper (Heart of Gold) Mommy Justice Nkemdilim Izuakor, who made sure I lacked nothing and you kept believing in me, thanks Mom, you are the best not forgetting my wonderful sister and supporter Oby Izuakor, you guys are simply amazing. To my dearest cousin Emeka Christian Chukwu, I love you dearly. A big thanks to friends and well-wishers.
Table of Contents

Student’s Declaration .............................................................. ii
Approval Page .......................................................................... iii
Copyright ................................................................................ iv
Acknowledgement ..................................................................... v
Dedication ............................................................................... vi
Table of Contents ..................................................................... vii
List of Tables ............................................................................ viii
List of Figures ........................................................................... ix
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms ........................................... xi
Abstract ................................................................................... xii
CHAPTER ONE ........................................................................ 1
1.0 Introduction ........................................................................ 1
1.1 Background of the Study ..................................................... 3
1.2 Statement of the Problem .................................................... 6
1.3 Purpose of the Study .......................................................... 7
1.4 Research Objectives ........................................................... 7
1.5 Significance of the Study ....................................................... 8
1.6 Rationale of the Study ........................................................ 9
1.7 Scope of the Study ............................................................. 9
1.8 Definition of Terms ............................................................ 10
CHAPTER TWO ......................................................................... 12
THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW ......... 12
2.0 Introduction .......................................................................... 12
2.1 Theoretical Framework ....................................................... 12
2.2 Empirical Literature Review ............................................... 16
2.3 Contextual Literature Review .............................................. 28
2.4 Conceptual Framework ....................................................... 32
2.5 Research Questions ............................................................ 33
2.6 Chapter Summary .............................................................. 34
CHAPTER THREE ..................................................................... 35
METHODS .............................................................................. 35
3.0 Introduction .......................................................................... 35
3.1 Research design ............................................................... 35
3.2 Research approach ............................................................ 37
3.3 Population and sampling design ......................................... 38
3.4 Operationalization of variables .......................................... 42
3.5 Instruments ......................................................................... 44
3.6 Ethics and Approval .......................................................... 47
3.7 Data collection methods ..................................................... 49
3.8 Data Analysis ...................................................................... 51
3.9 Research Procedures ........................................................ 51
3.10 Chapter Summary ............................................................ 52
CHAPTER FOUR ..................................................................... 53
FINDINGS ............................................................................... 53
4.0 Introduction .......................................................................... 53
4.1 Demographic Characteristics ............................................. 53
4.2 Crisis Response Strategies utilized by UNIZIK ..................... 54

vii
4.3 Effects of Crisis Response Strategies on stakeholders Perceptions of Nnamdi Azikiwe University’s Reputation .......................................................... 58
4.4 Degree of Attribution of Responsibility .......................................................... 60
4.5 Stakeholders involvement in the implementations of crisis response strategies by UNIZIK ................................................................. 61
4.6 Chapter Summary ......................................................................................... 63
CHAPTER FIVE .............................................................................................. 64
DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION .............................................................. 64
5.0 Introduction ................................................................................................. 64
5.1 Discussion .................................................................................................... 64
5.2 Conclusion .................................................................................................... 71
5.3 Recommendations ........................................................................................ 73
5.4 Limitations of study ..................................................................................... 74
5.5 Areas for Further Research ........................................................................ 75
REFERENCES ................................................................................................. 77
APPENDICES .................................................................................................. 82
Appendix I: IRB Approval .................................................................................. 82
Appendix II: Nnamdi Azikiwe University Approval ........................................... 83
Appendix III: Distribution of Unizik’s Faculties and Departments ....................... 84
Appendix IV: Distribution of Nnamdi Azikiwe University’s Centres, Offices and Units 85
Appendix V: Letter of Introduction ..................................................................... 86
Appendix VI: Participant’s Informed Consent Form ........................................... 87
Appendix VII: Debriefing Form .......................................................................... 88
Appendix VIII: Focus Group Discussion Guide For Unizik’s Staff/ Students ........ 89
Appendix IX: Focus Group Discussion Guide For Unizik’s Management ............ 91
Appendix X: Focus Group Demographic Questionnaire Management ................ 93
Appendix X: Quantitative Research Instrument (Questionnaire) ........................ 94
Appendix XI: Focus Group Discussion Responses ............................................. 95
List of Tables

Table 3.1: Populations and Sample Sizes At 5% Error Margin and 95% Confidence Level ...........................................................................................................................................39

Table 4.1: Mean Score on the Degree of Attribution of Responsibility for the March 28th Miracle Junction Cultism Crisis ...........................................................................................................................................60
List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework ........................................................................... 32
## List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Definition/Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCCT</td>
<td>Situational Crisis Communication Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIZIK</td>
<td>Nnamdi Azikiwe University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KU</td>
<td>Kenyatta University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JKWUAT</td>
<td>Jomo Kenyatta University of Science and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QDA</td>
<td>Qualitative Data Analysis Software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Package for Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCA</td>
<td>Root Cause Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Abstract
Crisis in Nigerian higher Institutions is inevitable. So long as Universities are in existence, they are not immune to crises. Therefore, Universities must ensure they communicate to stakeholders after a crisis hits. These responses are called crisis response strategies which are basically what crisis managers do or say after a crisis. This study was done due to limited literature on cultism crisis communication in Nigeria and influences of crisis response strategies on stakeholder’s perceptions towards an organisation’s reputation from the perspective of stakeholder’s involvement especially in Africa. It examined a cult incident that occurred in a University in Nigeria at Miracle Junction. Four major questions were posed in this study, to ascertain what crisis response strategies were used by the University in handling the crisis, how the response strategies affected stakeholders perceptions of the university’s reputation, who was to be blamed for the crisis and lastly, whether stakeholders were involved in the implementation of theses crisis response strategies. The findings of the study revealed that the University did not provide on-going instructing and adjusting information for their various stakeholders to ensure that they get protected and cope psychologically, rather, they employed denial and diminish strategies to help protect their reputation. This lack of communication led to negative perceptions of the University’s reputation by students who are the core stakeholders in a university. This lack of communication can pose a threat to the University if not checked. Findings also revealed that majority (42%) staff, (21.4%) management and (35.7%) student of respondents believed that the university was not to be blamed for the crisis considering the nature of the crisis type; this finding however, supported the assumptions of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory that stakeholders attribute responsibility to an organisation based on the crisis type, history and prior relational relationship. Also, there was a mixed response from students and management of the University with regards to stakeholder’s involvement, the management claimed they involved stakeholders while the students claimed they were not involved. Therefore, for any organization to survive and protect its reputation communication must be key and this should be done in all crisis phases. Communication and stakeholder involvement during crisis from organizations breed awareness and feedback to ensure the organization’s harmony.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.0 Introduction

A crisis is an unpredictable event that can befall an organization unexpectedly and greatly influence key organizational assets like reputation (Lando, 2014). For crises, it is not a matter of if, but when (Coombs & Holladay, 2010). No Institution is immune to crisis, so long as it operates, Institutions should therefore ensure that appropriate crisis response strategies are employed to fit in to the type of crisis/crises experienced in the Institution. A crisis has been defined as ‘a major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting an organization, company, or industry, as well as publics, products, services or good name. It interrupts normal business transactions and can sometimes threaten the existence of the organization’ (Fearn-Banks 1996: 1).

Vurro (2013) averred that intangibles such as corporate reputation is increasingly considered the major source for value creation and organizations success and it is very difficult to manage when there is an unpleasant relationship between the organization and the stakeholders. Harrison, Freeman, and Abreu (2015) reiterated that it is thus, prudent for all organizations to ensure they build healthy interactions with stakeholders to create, maintain and sustain positive attitudes and perceptions towards the organization especially during a crisis.

Cultism in Nigerian higher institutions poses danger to the lives and safety of different stakeholders. According to Oyemwinmina and Aibieyi (2015) cultism has become a major social menace and issue in the Nigerian tertiary institutions as its activities and modus operandi are covered in utmost secrecy and their actions detrimental to the institutions in question and the entire society.
Ajayi (2015) defined Cultism as ritual practices done by a group of persons whose operations, beliefs, membership and modus operandi are carried out in secrecy with their activities having adverse effects on both member of the cult and non-members.

Omebe and Omebe (2015) believed that cultism in Nigerian educational sector has become a crisis situation due to its uncontrollability and its high spread among secondary, primary schools in the country. Higher institutions of learning in Nigeria have over the years been saddled with this problem called cultism. Azelama, Alude and Imhonda (2004) asserted that “cult is a conglomeration of individuals bound together by specific ideals, beliefs whose rites and operations are enveloped in secrecy and they cannot be broken.

According to Okwu (2007) five thousand students and lectures have lost their lives in Nigerian institutions of higher learning as a result of cult related violent crisis. According to Oyegoke (2003) cultism has become an overwhelming issue in Nigerian tertiary intuitions due to the fact that almost every aspect of the institutions have been infested by cultism. Oyegoke posits that what was created to be a source of social help and formulated for positive energy has today turned into instruments of intimidations, killings, harassments, extortions and undue influence. These mean that institutions in Nigeria are undergoing several crises caused by cultism. The adverse effects of cultism in educational institutions have continued to be a source of worry to governments and the entire society.

Cultism is seen by many in Nigeria as a big challenge and crisis to institutions in because it disrupts the academic operations and has negative effects. Institutions must therefore ensure that they communicate these crises to their various stakeholders whenever they occur. They must also endeavour to put adequate crisis response
strategies in place in order to successfully handle cult crisis, this will help in reducing reputational threats and saving their reputation.

Kelly (2014) asserted that response strategies are employed in crisis situations to reduce the damage caused by crises. The selection of crisis response strategies employed should be based on the extent of crisis responsibility. Universities experiencing cult crisis should endeavour to communicate with their various stakeholders, provide them with information about the incidents and the steps the management intends to take in order to protect them from becoming victims and coping with the situation psychologically.

1.1 Background of the Study

On 28th March 2018, a cult clash broke out between two cult groups Vikings and Aye at a place called Miracle Junction which is regarded as a hot zone for members of the university, as a result of this cult war between the two groups one student named Dusky was killed, so many other students were shot and injured. This incident, led to the arrests of one hundred and thirty-five students suspected to be members of the two cult groups Newslinknija.com (2019, September 3). The unfortunate incident however, affected the operations of the university and fear engulfed different stakeholders as many feared for their lives and safety within and outside the University. The university’s management in their defense and in an attempt to ensure stakeholders were safe, deployed their anti-cult groups to the crime scene to quell the situation.

This study sought to investigate the existence of a crisis response strategy to the above cult incident at Miracle Junction in Nnamdi Azikiwe University. It further sought to examine the involvement of stakeholders by the university management in
the implementation of crisis response strategies and in image protection to safeguard the institution’s reputation. More so, the study sought to examine stakeholders perceptions of these crisis response strategies towards the University’s reputation and lastly to determine the degree of attribution of responsibility to the University.

Kelley (2014) postulated that crisis response strategies that are not in consonance with crisis responsibility, crisis type, and initial relational reputation will lead to a damaged reputation as well as hurt the organizational stakeholder relationships. Therefore, response strategies have the capacity to either destroy or strengthen a University’s standing because crisis response strategies adopted by an organization during crisis are perceived differently by stakeholders. Thus, universities who value their image and reputation which are very important asset must involve stakeholders in the framing of crisis messages that are to be communicated to their various publics.

Sontaitė-Petkevičienė (2014) averred that crisis communication and stakeholder involvement seek to reduce the effects of crises and restore favourable organizational reputation among stakeholders who are a key ingredient for its survival. A crisis can threaten the existence of a university and the manner in which the crisis managers within the University handle crisis determines the extent of reputational remedy or damage to the University.

According to Kelley (2014) response strategies are employed in crisis situations to reduce the damage caused by crises. Therefore, it is important that management of universities experiencing crisis remain hands on to protect their image, or they may end up having very bad reputation that may lead to the loss of important stakeholders, and to avert this, they must carefully engage their stakeholders in their decision-making in order to arrive at acceptable and positive
crisis response strategies towards mitigating the problems caused by the present crisis or situation through adequate and timely crisis communication.

The realisation of this stakeholder engagement will give rise to a healthy relationship between organizations or universities and its various stakeholders and will go a long way in maintaining, protecting the image and reputation of the organisation/university. This is supported by Breuklander (2015), who asserted that a healthy relationship between the organization and its various stakeholders must be cultivated before and in the face of a crisis and can be achieved through effective and appropriate crisis involvement and communication which will in turn lead to organizational success.

When universities understand the nature of crisis before them, they are in a better position to implement adequate and appropriate response strategies to help protect their image from being ruined, thereby leading to positive post-crisis attitude towards the organisation. To buttress this, Claeys and Cauberghe (2014), asserted that rational and shared framing of crisis response strategies shared with stakeholders can ensure that these strategies match the crisis type and increase the post-crisis attitude towards the organization. This can lead to strong organizational reputation that reduces how stakeholders are affected in times of crisis (Breuklander, 2015). These assertions explain the benefits accrued to organizations when they involve stakeholders.

According to Van Der Merwe and Puth (2014) the strategic role of corporate communication is the integration of stakeholders with the organizational goals in order to strengthen the trust stakeholders have of it. As a result, policies and decisions regarding the organization as well as stakeholder’s operations well-being will affect reputation either positively or negatively. Although the organization stakeholder
relationship is, arguably, anchored on rights and obligations. Walker and Dyck (2014) observed that indeed stakeholders hold more weight in the success of the organization than vice versa.

In this regard, crisis communication implementation of crisis response strategies must be founded on the inclusion of stakeholders so that there is mutuality and effectiveness in an organization’s perception, which will lead to a harmonious co-existence of an organization and its various stakeholders.

This study helped provide more literature on the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of crisis response strategies, which were not fully explored in previous studies reviewed. The implication is that organisations need to fully engage their stakeholders through communication into their response strategies that are to be employed in order to solve a crisis. This involvement will help organizations and crisis managers understand the nature of the crisis, how they affect different stakeholders and as such, will help them decipher and come up with relevant response strategies to mitigate the problem. Organizations are therefore tasked to ensure that they select and have the appropriate crisis response strategies employed to match the extent of crisis responsibility.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The study examined the influences of crisis response strategies on stakeholder’s perceptions of universities reputation in Nigeria. Several studies have been conducted by scholars in regards to Situational Crisis Communication Theory, but they were not in Africa. However, several scholars have discussed cultism in Nigerian universities but not from the perspectives of Situational Crisis Communication Theory and stakeholder’s involvement. Ekpedeme (2019) explored
the concept of cultism and investigated the causes of it in Nigerian Institutions, Udoh and Ikezu (2014) examined the causes, effects and strategies for eradicating cultism in tertiary institutions, Oyemwinmina and Aibiyei (2015) discussed cultism looking at it from the problems they pose to higher institutions of learning in Nigeria.

Despite the benefits of Situational Crisis Communication Theory guidelines to crisis managers, limited research was found that explored SCCT in Nigerian institutions with regards to cultism crisis communication and stakeholder’s involvement. It is in line with the foregoing that this study was conducted, to help provide literature on Situational Crisis Communication Theory guidelines and how they can be applied to the issue of cultism in Nigeria and also to provide recent literature in SCCT especially in Africa.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to find out how the crisis response strategies employed by Nnamdi Azikiwe University during Miracle Junction cult crisis influenced its stakeholders perception of the university’s reputation, and to ascertain the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of these response strategies.

1.4 Research Objectives

(i) To examine the crisis response strategies used by Nnamdi Azikiwe University in the wake of Miracle junction cultism crisis.

(ii) To interrogate how these response strategies influenced stakeholder’s perceptions of the University’s reputation.

(iii) To explore the degree of attribution of responsibility attributed to the University.
(iv) To determine stakeholders involvement in the implementation of these response strategies.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The information generated in this study would be important and helpful for institutions in making organizational decisions as this would provide useful information for institutions with regards to involving stakeholders in implementing crisis response strategies to suit a particular crisis type. In addition, the numerous literature on stakeholder’s involvement in implementing appropriate crisis response strategies could be of tremendous help to crisis managers who are saddled with the task of mitigating and dealing with one crisis type or the other in today’s contemporary society where crises are inevitable. The findings of this study would also serve as a guide and useful information for researchers who wish to explore on this area. The results of this study helped fill the gap that existed in the available literature concerning organizational/ stakeholder relationship and appropriate response strategies to crises and stakeholder's involvement. In addition, this study shed more light on the importance of taking precautionary measures for institutions like universities and other learning institutions in protecting their stakeholders through proper stakeholder involvement before and after crisis. The findings of this study would guide Nnamdi Azikiwe and other tertiary institutions into knowing the basics during crisis situation, and these findings would also help serve as blueprints to institutions during crisis.
1.6 Rationale of the Study

Cultism in Higher institutions of learning in Nigeria is not new, early preparations and effective communication are needed to help avert the damage and threats it poses to institutions. How crisis managers in these institutions manage and communicate this crisis determines what perceptions its various stakeholders will have of the Universities reputation, this includes the response strategies they will employ during the crisis. This study however, significantly increased the limited literature that are available in this field from the perspective of stakeholder involvement especially in Africa, this would also help crisis managers in learning and understanding different measures to be taken during cultism crisis and will help in reducing the severity of a crisis.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study focused on the importance of cultism crisis communication in increasing a University’s reputation favorably, this is because, a good reputation and image of a university will attract students and more investors to the University. This research focused on Nnamdi Azikiwe University Miracle junction cultism crisis, situated in Anambra State Nigeria in which 1 student was killed, several students injured. Considering the fact that cultism is a reoccurring event in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, it is important to understand the role the University management plays in responding to this crisis.
1.7.1 Delimitation

The study focused only on Nnamdi Azikiwe University in Anambra State Nigeria. The researcher chose only six members of the management, twelve staff including academic and non-academic and 12 students for the focus group discussions out of the twenty three thousand nine hundred and eighty one total population of both staff and students of the university. The researcher also chose six hundred and forty-eight respondents from the total population for the quantitative aspect.

Another delimitation is that the study focused only on the internal stakeholders of the university.

1.8 Definition of Terms

The following definitions of terms were used in this Study:

1.8.1 **Crisis:** Coombs (2014) defined a crisis as “a significant disruption to operations and/or the perception by stakeholders that the organization has violated important expectancies”.

1.8.2 **Crisis Communication:** Coombs (2010) defined crisis communication as the collection, processing and dissemination of information required to address a crisis situation. This deals majorly with what the organisation/Institution does after a crisis.

1.8.3 **Crisis Response Strategies:** Ki and Nekmat (2014) defined crisis response strategies as what an organization says or does after a crisis.

1.8.4 **Reputation:** Organizational reputation can be defined as the aggregate stakeholder judgements and view of an organization which all emanate from their understanding of the information received about the organization from various sources (Isler et al, 2013).
1.8.5 **Stakeholders:** “Groups and individuals who can affect, or are affected by, the achievement of an organization’s mission” (Harrison, Freeman, & Abreu, 2015).

1.8.6 **Stakeholder Involvement:** Stakeholder Involvement is the procedure/method adopted by an organisation in order to fully engage relevant stakeholders for the purpose of achieving desired outcomes (Deloitte, 2014).

1.8.7 **Attribution of responsibility:** The act of seeking explanations naturally as to why certain events and incidents happen (Rickard, 2014).

1.8.8 **Cult:** A religious group of individuals who live together whose beliefs and doctrines are seen as extreme or strange by many. (Dictionary, 2016).

1.9 **Chapter Summary**

Crisis affects individuals differently in organizations and as such, organizations need to involve stakeholders in the development and implementation of the crisis response strategies to be developed in solving a crisis. This chapter introduced the study purpose which was geared towards examining the influences of crisis response strategies on stakeholder’s perceptions of Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The statement of problems, research objectives, significance of the study, scope of study, limitations where all introduced in this chapter. Nnamdi Azikiwe University was the major focus of this study, the choice of this study in this University was simply because little or no studies had been done on this topic in the University, State or other tertiary institutions in the country and as such, this would go a long way in providing relevant information in the field. Literature would be reviewed in chapter two, chapter three would include the research methodologies, data analysis and findings would be presented in chapter four and lastly, conclusions and recommendations were made in chapter five.
CHAPTER TWO

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, literature reviewed Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). The chapter began with the theoretical framework then the general literature review. In the general literature review, crisis response Strategies was followed by empirical literature on different crises experienced in Universities globally, regionally and locally. The next section was the conceptual framework which was lastly followed by a summary of the chapter. However, the chapter explored and acknowledged the major findings by different scholars who have conducted various studies previously on issues of crisis communication and response strategies.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

It is of utmost importance to understand reasons behind stakeholders’ perceptions and behaviour especially during a crisis, however, the SCCT developed by Timothy Coombs provides the rational and guidelines for the above assertion and it suits the study.

2.1.1 Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) introduced by Coombs in [1995] is firmly grounded in attribution theory which defines the inter-relationships between an organization and stakeholders. Attribution theory posits that people inquire for the causes of an event and make attributions (Weiner, 1985; Weiner 1986, 2006). However, Situational Crisis Communication Theory has over the years been revised and it provides a framework upon which crisis managers use in maximizing reputational protection caused by post crisis communication. Situational crisis
communication theory is solely centred on protecting the reputation of an organization during a crisis (Coombs, 2015). Coombs and Holladay (2010) maintained that because SCCT attempts to brighten the manner at which organization’s stakeholders perceive crises, it can be said to be an audience oriented theory. It also illuminates how stakeholders react to organizations experiencing crisis. They also maintained that the fundamental component of SCCT is crisis responsibility and stakeholder’s attributions of crisis responsibility and these have a tremendous effect on stakeholder’s perceptions of an organization’s reputation which determines their behavioral responses to the affected organization.

Situation Crisis Communication Theory also avails a set of guidelines on how crisis managers should utilize crisis response strategies to protect an organisation’s reputation from the wreck of a crisis (Bayarong, 2015). Coombs (2014) defined a crisis as “a significant disruption to operations and/or the perception by stakeholders that the organization has violated important expectancies”. This implies that crisis threatens the very existence of an organisation and as such, the crisis type should guide the crisis managers in selecting the best response strategies in order to protect the organizations reputation. However, if the organisation is perceived as being responsible for the crisis, stakeholders might get angry and furious with the organisation and will sever relationship and connection with the organization or create very negative impressions about the organization, because, anger is what triggers and motivates stakeholders into negative actions towards organizations.

Reputational damage has mainly been due to poor crisis communication which always makes stakeholders who are victims angry. On-going communication with stakeholders creates in them the feeling that the company is in firm control of the
situation. However, absence of this communication in crisis times creates a harbinger in the process of bringing back the organization to its former glory (Coombs 2015).

As Coombs (2014) averred in the SCCT framework, an examination of the nature of the crisis by crisis managers and gauging the level of reputational threat and this informs the decision to select the best crisis response strategies to manage the crisis. Ineffective crisis communication or lack of it threatens the reputation which is the most important organizational asset whose damage leads to organizational downfall. In this crisis context, three factors will influence the degree of reputational threat: (1) Crisis history, (2) Initial crisis responsibility, and (3) prior relational reputation.

Initial crisis responsibility is the extent to which an organisation is blamed as a result of negligence due to past occurrences. In the same vein, this strengthens the fact that when there is an increase in the level of attribution of responsibility for the crisis by the stakeholders, lower reputational score points will be evidenced. This thus means that an exponential increase in attributions of responsibility equally increases the reputational threat (Coombs, 2015). Crisis history is whether or not the organisation had experienced similar crisis in the past while prior relational reputation is how nicely and well the organization has treated its stakeholders in the past in a variety of issues (Coombs, 2015).

Further research had outlined crisis cluster upon which attributions of responsibility is anchored by the type of crisis: (1) The victim cluster encompasses very weak attribution of responsibility since the organization in question is also considered as victim of the crisis, they include natural disasters, workplace violence, product tampering and rumour, (2) The accidental cluster is packaged in moderate attribution of responsibility and include technical-error accident, technical-error
product harm and challenge, and (3) The intentional crisis has the strongest attributions of responsibility because it is considered an act of negligence by the organization. They include human-error accident, human-error product harm and organizational misdeed (Coombs and Holladay, 2015).

According to Coombs (2015) SCCT builds on image repair theory by identifying a limited set of primary crisis response strategies and secondary crisis response strategies. The denial strategy includes, attacking the accuser, which means the crisis manager accosting the person or group alleging that something is amiss with the organization, Denial of the story which describes the manager’s argument that there is absolutely no problem while Scape-goat entails the crisis manager’s shifting of blame to some external actors for the problem. Diminishment crisis response strategies where offering of excuses and justification of the event that happened is the other of the day. The crisis manager reduces refuting claims of intentional bad behaviour and noting that the inability to prevent the crisis led to the situation and justification where the crisis manager reduces the damage caused by the crisis. Rebuilding response strategies include compensation of victims through offering of money or other necessities to the victims, offering of apology, which describes the crisis manager accepting responsibility for the crisis as well as asking for forgiveness (mortification).

Furthermore, Coombs (2007) averred that in secondary crisis response strategies, bolstering responses involve reminder, which is the situation where the organization informs the stakeholders of the good works of the organization, ingratiation which is basically where the crisis manager reminds the stakeholders of the previous work the organization has engaged in, and victimage, where the crisis manager tells the stakeholders that the organization is a victim too to the crisis.
2.2 Empirical Literature Review

2.2.1 Organizational Crisis:

An organizational crisis can be described as an event that is perceived by organisation’s managers and stakeholders as extremely unpredictable, unexpected, salient that has the tendency of disrupting an organisation’s operations (Bundy, Pfarrer, Short & Coombs, 2016). Organisational crisis can threaten an organization’s goals and have profound implications for its relationships with stakeholders. Crisis according to Debra Davenport (2018) is defined as “any incident, happenings or circumstance that negatively or adversely impacts organizations or individual’s reputation, credibility, or brand.” Organisational crisis is also seen as an event that touches an organisation or has the tendency of affecting the entire organisation positively or negatively. For an event to be considered as a crisis, it must have a major impact on human lives, property and would have affected the financial earnings of an organisation and also the reputation (Mitroff & Anagnos 2001: 34–35). Barton (2001) also defined it as an event that is unexpected, overwhelming and negative to an organization.

A crisis to an organization reflects poorly and badly and has potentials of destroying an organizations reputation to some extent. Most importantly crises are now reputation-based (Sohn & Lariscy, 2013). Coombs (2014) defined an organisational crisis as a major or tremendous disruption to operations of an organization or the perception by stakeholders that the organization has violated important expectancies. Organisational crisis has the potentials of disrupting the day to day activities of an organisation because its elements include, surprises, uncertainty, uncontrolled events, and they have the capacity of negatively affecting an organization if not properly handled. The prevailing factor that is inherent in these
few definitions of crisis is the fact that crisis has negative potentials of disrupting an organisation and its reputation which serves as a point of agreement between these scholars.

2.2.2 Crisis Communication

Crisis Communication is defined as the gathering, processing and dissemination of important information needed to quell a crisis situation by an organization (Coombs, Holladay & Sherry 2010). Crisis management is largely dependent on the organizations’ crisis communication which entails quick and accurate communication of the on-going crisis by an organization to its stakeholders.

Coombs (2010) postulated that communication is very crucial in crisis management, because crisis managers collect information, process them meaningfully and disseminate them with various stakeholders. Communication is very important to an organisation experiencing crisis because at every crisis phase, stakeholders require different kinds of information regarding the crisis to help them cope with the crisis.

In analyzing the effectiveness of crisis response strategies and its appropriateness to a particular type of crisis, Coombs and Holladay (2013; 2012a) postulated that the suitability of the crisis communication as well as the expected results can be generated from their role which are geared towards reducing an organization’s reputational damage and also preventing the organization from negative word of mouth from secondary communication when they fail to steal the thunder. Coombs (2014) asserted that crisis communication is fashioned to help protect organizational reputation from damage and this helps reduce the reputational threats to organizations. These definitions of crisis communication imply that crisis communication helps an organization to provide information about a crisis to various stakeholders.
stakeholders.

Crisis communication, entails the gathering, synthesis, and the dissemination of crisis information in order to help stakeholders protect themselves physically is a very integral part of crisis management (Coombs, 2007). Coombs (2014) averred that crisis communication is designed to protect organizational reputation from damage or reduce threats caused by the damage. More so, crisis management, which is the process purposed at minimizing the threats to organizational stakeholders as well as the reputation is composed of three important phases: the pre-crisis, the crisis response, and the post-crisis. Communication is important and very vital in these three phases of crisis because it helps provide stakeholders with information they need regarding the crisis and what they should do at every stage to protect themselves from becoming victims and coping during and after the crisis.

The first phase is the pre-crisis phase which is called the preparation phase. This is where crisis managers try to identify potential crisis to enable them guard against it, at this stage, a crisis management plan is designed including the selection of members of the crisis management team (Coombs, 2014, 2010). Early preparation as well as effective planning help in effective response to a crisis and this reduces the damage on reputation and the stakeholders (Barton, 2001, Coombs, 2006).

The second phase is the Crisis phase, this stage requires organizations to provide its various stakeholders with information regarding the crisis. Lerbinger (2012) asserted that organizations who must be on top of any crisis must be proactive, this implies that they must ensure that information concerning a crisis is disseminated by the organization before stakeholders feed on grapevines and rumors.
In the post crisis phase, the organization is battling to regain its stand, safe itself from reputational losses and return to normalcy. The crisis is no more the crux of the matter, rather, they organization is ensuring that the promises made to their stakeholders during the crisis are met in order to protect its image. Coombs (2010) averred that post crisis communication by organization entails crisis response communication together with the lessons learnt from the crisis. Additionally, Coombs (2010) asserted that as an organization tries to return to normalcy after a crisis, there is need for the organization’s stakeholders to be informed on the corrective and continuity steps taken by the organization this is important in this stage because, stakeholders are always curious and they want to know what has happened, the steps taken by the organization to attend to the crisis, this information will also make them believe that the organization is transparent an able to handle the crisis.

Crisis communication messages are very important and essential during an organizational crisis because they provide information to organization’s stakeholders who are affected by the crisis, these messages also protect stakeholders and these help the organization’s reputation from being badly damaged. (Coombs, 2010c; Fediuk et al., 2010). Crisis communication is an applied field that attempts to avail certain guidance and instructions to organizations crisis managers in order for them to limit the dangers and harm a crisis can cause on various stakeholders and organization (sciencedirect.com).

2.2.3 Crisis Response Strategies

Coombs (2015) asserted that crisis response encompasses what crisis managers do or say during crisis. Crisis response strategies are what organizations do when crisis hits, however, various studies have revealed how organizations utilize response strategies in trying to solve one crisis or the other. Interestingly, most of
these literatures bother on the Situational Crisis Communication theory by Timothy Coombs, which defines the interrelationships between an organization and its stakeholders. However, from this Situational Crisis Communication theory (SCCT) perspective, there exits crucial information that are needed in the crisis response strategies. During a crisis, priority is given to protecting stakeholders before embarking on organizational reputation since stakeholders hold the key to reputational growth. In this regard, a proper evaluation of the reputational threat to organizations / institutions after a crisis is paramount before appropriate response strategies will be adopted. Furthermore, organizations should employ instructing information which informs stakeholders what they must do in order to protect themselves against further damage. According to Coombs (2015) this instructing information prevents stakeholders from becoming victims (Sturges, 1994), through disseminating warning message telling them to vacate, take refuge, or forfeit from buying some products. Since crisis create anger and anxiety Ayoko, Ang, & Parry, 2017; Jin & Pang, 2010; Coombs and Holladay(2015), maintained that crisis communication dilutes the anxiety by reducing the ambiguity as well as the use of corrective mechanisms in explaining what the organization has adopted to prevent future occurrences of similar crises.

On the one hand, adapting information provides a basis for coping with the psychological effects of the crisis. This is because the crisis causes uncertainty which triggers the need for timely and adequate information (Sellnow et al., 2015).

Utilizing the above assertion, Lathi (2015), stated that Crisis communication involves communicating well with stakeholders in times of crisis by employing appropriate and effective response strategies. Communication protects organizational reputation as well as providing information about the crisis to stakeholders and how
they can protect themselves. Indeed, they are the available strategies for crisis managers to respond to a crisis. Thus, crisis communication can be explicated into two strategies. (i) Managing information (ii) Managing meaning.

Managing information involves gathering, synthesizing, and disseminating crisis related information while managing meaning involves attempts to influence how stakeholders interpret and view the organization involved in the crisis. Since crisis response strategies are packaged within the managing meaning framework, their application in a crisis must bear in mind the effects on stakeholders’ view of the crisis. Additionally, crisis response strategies are further categorized into three groups: instructing information, adjusting information, and reputation repair (Coombs, 2015).

Crisis response strategies have three key functions: (i) Construct crisis attributions (ii) shape stakeholder perception of the organization (iii) minimize negative affect triggered by the crisis. For effectiveness of the crisis response strategies, it is important for crisis managers to critically assess the crisis situation and select effective and appropriate crisis response strategies based on three main concepts: (i) crisis type (ii) crisis history (iii) relational reputation (Coombs & Holladay, 2013).

Crises impact organizational reputations in significant ways that may lead to problems touching on both economic as well as reputational challenges to the organization. If not managed well, a crisis can afflict unimaginable dent on reputation that can sink an organization. Crisis communication is designed to lessen the effects of crises on reputation by providing a framework for assessing the crisis then selecting the most appropriate and effective crisis response strategies that will lessen the disequilibrium caused (Ashari, Ahmad, & Samani, 2017; Coombs, 2007).
Additionally, Cauberghe (2014) exploring the situational crisis communication theory in her study buttressed the benefits of crisis involvement and message framing on the effects of crisis response strategies on post-crisis response attitude towards an organization. The implication of this is that organizations who fully involve their stakeholders during crisis will come up with appropriate measures and this will in turn trigger a positive post-crisis behaviour from the stakeholders towards the organization which will secure and protect the organizations image.

The target audience is also an important element that cannot be overlooked in crisis response. Those affected (victims) and not affected (non-victims) by the crisis constitute the two major audiences for a crisis message. Anyone affected directly or indirectly, whether physically, emotionally, psychologically, or monetarily by the crisis, can be termed a victim. Non-victims emerge as those who may be affected by the crisis in future. While victims are required to obtain instructing and adjusting information concerning the crisis first, potential victims and voyeurs are also important players because “if these audiences frown at the crisis response, it will soil or damage their relationships and future interactions with the organization in crisis” (Coombs, 2015, p. 139).

Conclusively, studies have shown that appropriateness of a crisis response strategy is solely dependent on the involvement of stakeholder groups through proper communication by the organization during crisis but didn’t recognize the need for proper involvement of stakeholders in the development and implementation of crisis response strategies by organizations and as such, there is need to improve this study by introducing the importance of Stakeholders involvement in the response strategies utilized by organizations in solving a crisis (Coombs, 2015, Coombs, & Holladay, 2013).
However, a similar study conducted by Ki and Brown (2013), on the effects of crisis response strategies on relationship quality outcomes revealed that crisis response strategies did not reduce stakeholders blame towards an organization in the wake of crisis, which basically means that the presence of crisis in an organization tends to naturally disrupt the relationship that exists between an organization and its publics regardless of the crisis response strategies adopted by an organization. This finding contradicts the assertions of the situational crisis communication theory and the above cited literature which explored different tactics an organization can adopt to save and keep its relationship with stakeholders positively by developing appropriate crisis response strategies that will suit the crisis type.

Coombs (2014) explained further on his situational crisis communication theory by providing the importance of strategic communication. He noted that “strategic communication is an identification of assembled crisis response strategies and the factors that determine when these response options are effective or ineffective”.

2.2.4 Stakeholder Involvement: Stakeholder Involvement is the procedure/ method adopted by an organisation in order to fully engage relevant stakeholders for the purpose of achieving desired outcomes (Trustworths International, 2017). Stakeholder involvement is also the process utilized by organisations to engage important stakeholders of an organisation in order to successfully achieve organisations set goals in a harmonious environment which in turn positively affect the organisations reputation (Annual report, 2017). In an article by web team, stakeholder’s involvement entails crafting a message that is honest and concise by an organization when an unexpected event happens, this process they will undergo having accessed the situation and collected facts, because, this will enable the organization know what
is expected of them by their stakeholders and what each group of stakeholder expects of them.

To buttress further, Gallagher (2013) maintained that in order to apply situational crisis communication strategy, the organisation going through crisis must maintain a regular dialogue with stakeholders on the prevailing situation, and such communication should factor in necessary information on the remedial / corrective actions and the possible implications of such corrective actions.

Claeys and Cauberghe, (2014) postulated that stakeholders’ involvement in organizational crisis as well as how the crisis messages are framed affects how crisis response strategies will impact on post crisis attitude and perceptions towards the organization from stakeholders. Developing and sharing rational crisis response strategies with stakeholders and involving them in implementing these strategies maintain positive post crisis attitudes of stakeholders and at the same time can ensure that these strategies match the crisis type (Claeys and Cauberghe , 2014 ; Breuklander ,2015).

Florea and Florea (2013) defined stakeholders as people, institutions, and organizations, formal or non-formal groupings that have interests or may be affected or may affect the organization’s operations. In this definition, the nexus between the organization and its stakeholders is very much pegged on resource dependency theory, which holds that the dependency on certain resources important for both stakeholders and the organization informs the cultivation of this relationship (Wolf, 2014).

Matuleviciene and Stravinskiene (2015) maintain that corporate reputation has been conceptualized as the fusion between stakeholders and the organization. In other
words, positive interrelationships between the organization and stakeholders create a favourable working condition for the organization to create value for the stakeholders. In this regard, policies and organizational decisions will always affect stakeholders and create in them particular views of the organization.

In as much as research has shown that relationships between organizations and stakeholders is crucial for mutuality especially within the rubric of benefits and damage as well as obligations and rights (Peloza et al., 2012), other studies have also postulated that the influence of stakeholders on organizations by far surpasses the influence of organizations of stakeholders. Relatedly, the weight attached on the importance of the different stakeholders is distinct due to the different stakeholders that are distinctly defined according to their different roles in organizational set up and reputation (Walker & Dyck, 2014). However, this organizational-stakeholder relationship is also unfavourable when it is presumed to be one-sided. This is particularly rampant when the relations lack support, and are not transparent plus lack accountability (Krstic, 2014).

Furthermore, Krstic (2014) added that the organizational-stakeholder relationship that is founded on transparency and accountability is advantageous in that it reduces reputational risks, curtails underlying problems and makes solving them easier, increases the resource base, and also helps in improving product and service quality.

2.2.5 Reputation: is the single most important valued asset that is the basis for organizational survival. İşler, et al, (2013, 180) defined reputation as the totality of assessments of judgements held by individuals or groups of people concerning an organization’s past actions, the current potential to create value as well as its capabilities and trustworthiness. Reputation is a mirror of an organization’s potential
as well as the aggregate sum of its favourable and unfavourable perceptions in stakeholder’s minds. Crisis communication is the organization’s response to a crisis due to the threat posed to the reputation by the crisis.

A good corporate reputation can tremendously affect organizational performance and cause the inverse relationship to be true (Pirez&Trez, 2018). Reputation appears to be a major resource to universities and institutions of higher learning in the world at large. It is said to be an important asset because a good reputation to an educational institution will certainly attract different reputable sponsors, scholars this will also give room for economic developments. (Effiong, 2014).

Yuskel (2015) perceives organizational reputation to be the integral part of employer branding. However, Hendriks (2016) stated that organisational reputation is a perception or judgement of stakeholders about an organisation’s ability to create impression and value based on prior actions. This suggests that stakeholders make conclusions or attribute responsibilities to an organization during crisis based on past actions of an organization. Coombs & Holladay (2014), postulated that the more attribution of responsibility, the more damage to reputation evidenced.

Sohn and Lariscy (2013) explored reputational crisis by examining two crisis events which led to the assertion that organizational crises are merely reputational crises depending on how these crises are managed. This is because how an organization communicates crisis information is responsible for how the stakeholders will perceive it. Relatedly, organizational behaviour in times of crisis coupled with its past behaviours matters greatly. Stakeholders will attribute crisis responsibility on organization based on crisis history and their relationship with it. Poor organizational relationship with stakeholders will lead to poor reputation management as they will
engage in secondary crisis communication either through face-to-face interactions with others or through social media where negative information will be spread that will hurt the reputation. Thus, organizations that fail to communicate adequately with its various stakeholders during crisis can and will suffer serious consequences.

Brooks, Oringel, and Ramaley (2013) maintained “stakeholder perception, not the university’s reality, will drive reputation”, they also noted that practical measurement of a university’s reputation should be a composition of both the knowledge of stakeholder groups’ expectations of the university and the stakeholder groups’ perceptions of the university’s reality. The fact that organizations face difficult times due to crisis situations that threaten their important expectancies cannot be gainsaid. These crisis situations come with them contrasting stakeholder expectations and demands which damage the reputation if not attended to appropriately and effectively. Thus, these institutional complexities and uncertainties require appropriate definitions form the organizational arrangements (Frandsen, Johansen, & Salomonsen, 2016).

Conclusively, there is no universally accepted definition of organizational reputation, however, it is the perceptions different stakeholders hold or have of an organization based on how they have performed in the past cum their past records. Reputation is also perceived as an important asset without which an organisation suffers greatly.

2.2.6: Attribution of Responsibility: People naturally seek explanations as to why certain events happen (Rickard, 2014). According to Rickard (2014) “Individuals weigh the contributions of numerous factors to a given outcome and then decipher the pattern with which such factors and effects relate to each other. The way and manner at which stakeholders observe events of an organisation influence how they judge the
cause of a crisis, this could be from actions or inactions form an organization or some persons outside the organization.

Rickard (2014) later provided two additional properties upon which causal attribution of a given event is anchored, they include one, its controllability: this is the extent to which the cause is believed to be under personal or situational control, and two, its stability: the extent to which the cause is believed to change over time”. He further maintained that differences in attribution by risk perception, respondent attribute, and experience related variables are “instructive from a practical perspective because they support the assertion that communication to stakeholders should not in any way be seen as one-size-fits-all”.

2.3 Contextual Literature Review

Kelly (2014) with reference to the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Crisis that occurred in April 16, 2007 which led to the death of 32 students and Faculty plus the death of the Culprit explored situational Crisis Theory in her work by examining the various perceptions of multiple stakeholder groups to a university crisis response strategy and also to ascertain the possibility of applying the Situational Crisis Communication theory to a university fraternity. However, findings from her study showed that crisis response strategies are perceived differently by a stakeholder group, this is because, crisis affects individuals differently and as such no two individuals will feel crisis effects the same, and they will not possibly or unanimously perceive an organizations crisis response strategy the same way. Additionally, her study supported the application of Situational Crisis Communication Theory by Coombs in Universities because Universities are part of Organizations and no organization is immune to Crisis and as such there is need for proper communication among management and different stakeholder groups.
Effiong (2013) conducted a study in two public Universities in Nigeria to check how the Situational Crisis Communication Theory model is applied in higher institutions. Findings revealed that the two Universities studied adopted two strategies that were in line with the SCCT guidelines even though the University did not adopt the SCCT guidelines and recommendations fully. This implies that most universities in Nigeria have not understood the SCCT guidelines.

A study by Arijesuyo (2010) showed the theoretical perspectives on campus cultism and violence in Nigerian Universities. It was evident from this study that there is need to measure and analyse a complex dynamic process, campus cult violence activities within the psycho-infrastructural model suggested by the researcher as an intervention model for checking cultism in higher institutions.

A related study conducted by Ekpeyong (2010), examined secret cults in Nigeria Universities with special reference to Niger Delta University. It was however revealed from the findings that cultism in the country is a result of the collapse in the country’s economy; this was concluded because results showed that most people who indulge in cultism are from poor backgrounds. More so, the study recommended proper funding of the education sector by the government to help restore universities former glory and reputation.

Another study was empirically reviewed regionally by Rensburg, Conradie and Dondolo (2017) and this explored the use of Situational Crisis Communication Theory in the 2015 South African Universities crisis over fees known as “fees must fall” Crisis. These protests triggered unrest across South African universities, which necessitated universities temporary closures at some point. These crises placed the universities in a confused state, because some universities that were known for resolving crises quickly were not equipped to properly handle the crisis. The
implication is that communication is key to managing crisis, and crisis calls for the need for adequate and timely information and communication.

However, the above study basically sought to understand how the crisis communication activities at a South African university of technology was perceived by the Institution’s staff which also sought to ascertain how stakeholders perceive the communication channels and crisis response strategies that are employed by university’s’ management during students protest. Interestingly, findings from the research showed that the university only utilised justification crisis response strategy to relate with stakeholders disregarding other steps identified in SCCT. (Rensburg, Conradie and Dondolo, 2017).

A related study which was carried out by Nganga (2015), showed how courses in top universities in Kenya including Kenyatta University (KU), Jomo Kenyatta University of science and technology (JKUAT) and others in Kenya were disapproved by the professional bodies. This situation plunged these institutions into crisis and stakeholders wondered and questioned the credibility of some of these courses. However, the decisions by these regulatory bodies led to the indefinite suspension of some of these students by these universities thereby creating an unhealthy relationship between the universities and its various stakeholder groups. The implication of this is that for better organizational perception and image protection, adequate information needs to be provided by the organization to its various stakeholders, because inappropriate or lack of information leads to doubts among stakeholders and can result to greater crisis.

Another related study by Mbui (2016), explored the situational crisis communication theory and dwelt heavily on the role of crisis management in institutions of higher learning, and the need for institutions to anticipate crisis which
will lead to the institutions seeking ways to timely avert the anticipated crisis by providing adequate information. However, there wasn’t any mention of the crisis response strategies and the need for stakeholders to be fully involved in the implementation of crisis response strategies.

All these contextual reviews globally, regionally and locally explored the Situational Crisis Communication Theory in one way or the other and there were some points of agreement in the need for proper and timely communication about crisis with the organizations and its various stakeholders stressing the benefits of crisis communication. However, these studies did not extensively dwell on the importance of stakeholder involvement in formulating appropriate and effective crisis response strategies in the wake of a crisis considering the fact that different stakeholders experience crisis differently (Liu, Austine, & Jin, 2011). Thus, there is need for the involvement of stakeholders in the crisis response strategies formulation stage because this will help ascertain the best strategies to fit a crisis which is basically what Coombs tried to drive home with his Situational Crisis Communication Theory
2.4 Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables
- Crisis Response Strategies
- Attribution of responsibility
- Crisis type

Dependent Variables
- Organizational Reputation
- Prior Relational Relationship
- Intervening Variable

For this study, the independent variables were the crisis response strategies, attribution of responsibility and the crisis type (influencers). According to Flannelly, Flannelly Jankwski (2014) an independent variable is a variable that is assumed to influence another variable which is the dependent variables. In this sense, crisis response strategies employed by an organization in crisis must be in consonance with the crisis type and this will be achieved when stakeholders are involved in the implementation of these response strategies which will in turn shape the attribution of responsibility in order to have a favourable reputation. Similarly, a dependent variable, as to Flannelly, Flannelly and Jankwski (2014) is the variable that is affected by the independent variable. It encompasses the final outcome of a causal relationship. In this research, organizational reputation was the dependent variable.
This was because favourable or unfavourable organizational reputation depends on the crisis response strategies used by an organization during a crisis that are used in a crisis situation which are informed by the crisis type that shapes the level of attribution of responsibility.

The intervening variable also known as the mediating variables was considered as a step that interferes between an action and a response. It accounts for the relationship between the dependent and independent variables (VacaTipz, 2017). Emotional response which is determined by the crisis response strategies and stakeholder’s involvement will be the intervening variable in this study. The emotions produced, which encompass either anger or sympathy, will determine the overall stakeholder perception of the organization. If the attribution of responsibility is high the stakeholders will be angry, and this will have a negative influence on the reputation. In contrast, if the attribution of responsibility is low, stakeholders will express sympathy for the organization which will bear positively on the overall organizational reputation.

2.5 Research Questions

(i) What response strategies were used by Nnamdi Azikiwe University in the wake of Miracle Junction cult crisis?

(ii) How did the response strategies utilized by Nnamdi Azikiwe affect stakeholder’s perceptions of it?

(iii) What is responsible for the crisis?

(iv) Did Nnamdi Azikiwe University management involve their stakeholders in the implementation of these response strategies?
2.6 Chapter Summary

The chapter examined, crisis response strategies, Situational Crisis communication theory and the need by institutions to employ the guidelines provided by this theory in protecting their image during and after crisis, owing to the fact that crises are inevitable in organizations and as such institutions must ensure they protect their image and reputation. Also, the conceptual framework was formulated based on the objectives that were provided in chapter one of this study.

Additionally, this paper provided relevant literature in regard to understanding the theoretical framework that is important in understanding crisis response strategies, situational crisis communication theory, and the research methodology utilized in obtaining data.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discussed the research design and methodology, which included sampling, population, establishing difficulties and finally data collection and data analysis. All these are engulfed in ethical considerations in order to avoid penalties. This section explained the ways data were collected and analysed. The different subjects used in the data collection were identified and the units of measurements were explained. Importantly, the issues of ethics were factored in order not to infringe on the rights of other people. This study employed a qualitative and quantitative approach that enabled the researcher to get the general knowledge about the crisis and the university’s stakeholder’s involvement in decision making.

3.1 Research design

In a bid to achieving the various objectives of this study, the researcher utilized the emergent mixed method. In this study, the researcher adopted the sequential mixed method design to help in expanding and elaborating on the findings of one method. According to Cresswell and Clark (2007) sequential mixed methods tend to shed more light on the findings of one research approach. This can be adopting a qualitative interview for exploratory reasons and substantiating with survey method that involves a large sample in order to help generalize results to a population.

Bhat (2018) defined a research design as a framework of procedures adopted by a researcher to help mix various aspects of research in an organised logical manner to enable the researcher handle research problems efficiently. This helps educate a researcher on how to conduct research adopting several methods.
Research design is also described as ways a researcher puts down a research study together to help answer a particular question or a set of questions; this also serves as a plan for the study. (Michael, 2017).

According to Kothari (2012) there exits three types of research design: exploratory research design, descriptive research design, and hypothesis testing research design. Exploratory research design aims at crafting research problem for a more apt examination of and development of a hypothesis and generation of new information. Descriptive research design, describes the outcomes of a particular situation or person without manipulations while diagnostic research design examines how regular phenomena occur or their interactions with others. Hypothesis testing research design, also known as experimental studies, encompasses those in which the researcher tests the hypotheses of variables with causal relationships.

This study utilized the exploratory and descriptive research design. Bhat (2018) defined exploratory research as a research design used in investigating a problem that is not clearly defined. This research design was used in the study to help the researcher understand the existing problem of cultism and the response strategies used by the university. Descriptive design on the other hand was introduced in the study to help in interpreting quantitative results the way they are without having to manipulate results. Descriptive Research is an exploration of what is, what is in existence and the status of any given sample of a population, studies like this are often undertaken with inductive motives for building knowledge that could aid in theory development and suggest potential relationships between variables (Miksza & Elpus, 2018). Survey also involves selecting a sample from a large population, collecting and analyzing data from the sample and then generalizing the findings to the entire population (Wimmer & Dominick, 2016).
Exploratory research design was adopted for obtaining in-depth insights from management of the University, academic and non-academic staff of the university and the students of the university. Bhat (2018) also opined that exploratory research design is mainly used in studies to help answer questions like why, what and how. The survey approach was adopted for collecting data from the generality of the staff and student populations which are far larger than the management. Cresswell (2014) rightly asserts that survey is often used in learning about people’s knowledge, beliefs and preferences, which helps in assessing the views of the general population.

3.2 Research approach

A mixed method is defined as the class of research that allows a combination of quantitative and qualitative research techniques, approaches, methods in a single study. (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004, p. 14). Cresswell and Clark (2007:5) defined mixed method as the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches that helps in providing insights and clearer understanding of a research problem for a researcher. Cresswell and Plano (2007) defined a mixed method as an approach used in research to inquire that merges both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This approach makes the strength of a research study greater than either qualitative or quantitative.

The researcher utilized the emergent mixed method to help get a better understanding of the issue under study and it helped the researcher in determining the crisis response strategies the University adopted in the wake of Miracle junction crisis, how the strategies adopted affected stakeholders perceptions of the University, to understand who was to be blamed for the crisis and to establish the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the strategies.
3.3 Population and sampling design

A study population refers to the subject of a study, everything or everyone who is the subject of a statistical observation. This can be large or small but possess a number of characteristics (Taylor, 2018). Similarly, population also is the totality of members who have met the requirements of the research design (Alvi, 2016). This basically means a certain group that information for a study is gotten to validate a study (Hubbard, Lin, Zahs, & Hu, 2016). There are two types of population which are target population and accessible population. The target group is the group for which the researcher wishes to generalize the findings. Accessible population is the population for which the researcher has reasonable access which may be a subset of the entire population.

For this study, the population was the university community which comprises members of the management, staff and students above 18 years. These are critical groups as far as crisis communication and management in the university. The management principally drives the crisis management process, while the staff are equally instrumental to the process. Then, the students as the ultimate beneficiaries of the services offered by the university are also an important party in crisis management as every crisis, in one way or the other, affects them. In the context of the cult crisis under study here, the university management on whose shoulders the responsibility for security and peace of the campus rests are the most important actor in this instance of crisis management. The staff, as an extension of the management, also to a significant extent has responsibility. For the students, they are also a critical party here being that it was amongst them the crisis occurred and they were the direct victims of it.
The student population is 20,356, according to the data sourced from the Students’ Affairs Department of the university. They are distributed across the 14 faculties of the institution. The university management comprises of Vice Chancellor, Two deputies, Registrar, and other key personnel while the staff of the university including academic and non-academic number 3,625 according to the data supplied by the Academic planning unit of the University.

3.3.1 Sampling

Sampling is the identification of a small group of the population to evaluate the characteristics of the larger population (Emmanuel & Ibeawuchi, 2015).

For the qualitative aspect of the study, the researcher chose six members of the management, 12 academic and non-academic staff of the university and 12 students to respond to objectives one, two and four of the study qualitatively using the Focus group discussion method. These respondents were chosen because of their background knowledge of the crisis and they would function effectively.

For the quantitative aspect of the study, the researcher determined the sample size looking at the sample sizes worked out by Israel (2016) as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3.1: Populations and Sample Sizes At 5% Error Margin and 95% Confidence Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Size</th>
<th>Sample Sizes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>217</td>
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<td>1,000</td>
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<td>500,000</td>
<td>384</td>
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<td>1 million and above</td>
<td>384</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Thus, 278 and 370 were taken as the sample size for the staff and students’ populations respectively at 5% error margin and 95% confidence level to address research objective three which is the quantitative aspect of the study.

Since the staff is comprised of academic and non-academic categories, the researcher will determine the number to be selected from each of the two categories by applying the following formula:

\[ n = \frac{C \times S}{N} \]

Where \( n \) = number selected from a category

\( C \) = population of a category

\( S \) = sample size

\( N \) = sum of the populations of the two categories

Number selected from the academic staff category

\[ = \frac{1,232 \times 278}{3,625} \]

= 94.48

= 94 (approximated to the nearest whole number)

Number selected from the non-academic staff category

\[ = \frac{2,393 \times 278}{3,625} \]

= 183.51

= 184 (approximated to the nearest whole number)
Thus, 94 respondents were selected from the academic staff category while 184 will also be selected from the non-academic staff category. The multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted in the sample selection because it helped in dividing the large population into stages with the use of simple random sampling. For the academic staff category, the stages will be as follows:

At the first stage, the researcher selected seven out of the 14 faculties of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The selection was made using simple random procedure. The faculties were listed in alphabetical order, and using a table of random numbers seven faculties were selected. (See appendix III) For the non-academic staff category, the researcher selected two personnel from each of the 14 departments chosen above bringing the number to 28 respondents on the whole. She randomly selected further a designated number of respondents from each of the 24 centres/units/offices of the university based on the size of each centre/unit/office. (See appendix)

The numbers in the above table gave a total of 156 personnel. When added to the 28 selected from the faculties, it will amount to 184 required respondents.

Then, to select the student sample, the researcher also employed the multi-stage technique. At the first stage, the researcher selected (half) seven out of the 14 faculties of the university. The selection was made using simple random procedure. The faculties were listed in alphabetical order, and using a table of random numbers, the following faculties were selected: Agriculture, Arts, Biological Sciences, Education, Engineering, Management Sciences and Social Sciences.

The researcher chose two departments from each of the seven faculties selected above, using the same simple random procedure described earlier. At the
third stage, the researcher assigned a given number to students to each of the 14 departments proportionally according to the number of students in it. (See appendix IV)

This stratified approach will be adopted to ensure fair representation whereby the students in the department will be divided according to their levels. (Strata)

At the fourth stage, the researcher finally selected the respondents from each of the levels of study in each department ensuring that as much as possible the number will be evenly distributed among the levels. Here, the researcher employed the accidental sampling procedure, which enabled easy selection of available respondents in each selected class.

Finally, the researcher sampled two hundred and seventy-eight staff and three hundred and seventy students making it a total of six hundred and forty-eight respondents for the quantitative aspect of the study.

3.4 Operationalization of variables

The measure for this study was aggregated from the insights and concepts of SCCT identified from the questionnaires. Focus group Discussion question guide was structured in an open ended format, this means that some sections dealt with understanding the response strategies that were employed by UNIZIK in handling the cult crisis, how the university communicated with their stakeholders during the crisis, how appropriate the strategies were to the crisis, how these strategies influenced stakeholders perceptions of the University’s reputation and how stakeholders were involved in the decision making towards the crisis. The questionnaire was structured in such a way that some sections dealt with obtaining information about the crisis response strategies that were used by the university management and the influences of
these response strategies in the wake of cultism on the stakeholder’s perceptions of the organization’s reputation and how appropriate those strategies where to the crisis type and the level of attribution of responsibility.

This research examined four variables namely: crisis response strategies, attribution of responsibility, crisis types and organizational reputation.

3.4.1 Crisis Response Strategies: This research defined crisis response strategies as what an organization says or does after a crisis (Coombs (2015). The crisis response strategies will be treated as the independent variable. Additionally, corrective action, where the promise of taking action against the perpetrators of the heinous act and putting in place mechanisms to ensure that such acts do not occur again in future.

3.4.2 Crisis Types: Crisis type for this study will include the nature of crisis which stakeholders will consider before attributing responsibility to the organization. These crisis types/cluster include the victim cluster encompasses very weak attribution of responsibility since the organization in question is also considered as victim of the crisis, the accidental cluster is packaged in moderate attribution of responsibility, and the intentional crisis has the strongest attributions of responsibility because it is considered an act of negligence by the organization (Coombs and Holladay, 2015).

3.4.3 Attribution of Responsibility: For this study, attribution of responsibility was operationalized as the general assessment of stakeholders about the institution. It was assessed as the degree of responsibility and blame attributed to the organization during a crisis. This will be measured in the study using a four-point likert scale as stated previously.

3.4.4 Organizational Reputation: In this study, organizational reputation was operationalized as a perception or judgement of stakeholders about an organization’s
ability to create impression and value based on prior (Hendriks, 2016). To get the view from the stakeholders, a four-point Likert scale design questionnaire will be used. This organizational reputation was treated as the dependent variable in this study.

3.5 Instruments

The researcher formulated the focus group discussion guide that was used as a guide during the focus group discussion exercise. The focus group discussion questions were formulated in an open ended form to allow the researcher get an in-depth view from respondents on the issue under study, also the researcher had some demographic questionnaires for each those who participated in the focus group discussion exercise (See appendix X).

The researcher formulated the quantitative questionnaire, this was done in a close ended format. These questionnaires were distributed to students and staff of the university to get their opinions on their degree of attribution of responsibility to the University for the miracle junction cultism crisis. This survey aspect of the study was to enable the researcher generalize the findings of the results to research question three. The questionnaires were designed in a four points Likert scale. To gauge the university reputational standing, the participants were asked to rate their views on a four-point Likert scale. Ranging from four (strongly agree) to one (strongly disagree).

The Likert four points rating scale type grading is represented below:

- Strongly Agree (SA) ---- 4 points
- Agree (A) --------3 points
- Disagree (D) ----------- 2 points
- Strongly Disagree (SD) --1 point
3.5.1 Reliability

Reliability is described as the extent to which a research measurement instrument provides the same. (Crossman, 2019). Reliability of the study’s results was greatly enhanced because the researcher elicited information from respondents through several means. Reliability will help ensure that study’s findings are dependable, replicable and consistent.

3.5.2 Pretesting

This involved simulating the formal data collection process on a tiny/minimal scale in order to ascertain practical problems concerning data collection instrument, sessions and methodology. (Hurst, Arulogun, Owolabi, Akinyemi, Uvere, Warth & Ovbiagele, 2015). Before the researcher started data collection, the some of the questionnaires for quantitative approach were tested to ensure that they are in order such that they can collect the expected information from the respondents. The researcher conducted a pre-test of the questionnaire to help right the wrongs inherent in the questionnaires. Wimmer and Dominic (2014) recommend a 10-20% of the sample size for a pre-test. This research utilized a 20% of the sample size for a pre-test exercise for the quantitative aspect.

3.5.3 Validity

According to Iftikhar (2013) validity is the extent to which a test measures what it claims to measure. This is also explained as the vital for a test to be valid to ensure accurate and correct application and interpretation of the results. Therefore, Validity simply put is the degree to which a variable under study is measured. Cozby (2009) defined validity as the extent to which a measure exactly represents the elements it is supposed to measure and obtaining results that represent the variable
measured. Validity can be either external or internal. Internal validity involves factors from within that affect the validity. External validity involves the factors from the external environment that affect the validity.

**3.5.4 Internal Validity**

Iftikhar (2013) defines internal validity as the extent to which a study is free from flaws and that any differences in a measurement are as a result of independent variable and nothing else. This is basically checking the authenticity of a research and ascertaining how correctly the research was conducted. In this study, some threats to internal validity were aspects related to selective perception, which is the tendency not to notice and then quickly forget instances that cause emotional discomfort and confusion and then be contrary to people’s strongly held beliefs, selective exposure, the tendency to only see things that are in consonance with people’s predispositions, and selective retention, the tendency to remember only instances that are in line with people’s predispositions.

**3.5.5 External Validity**

External validity concerns itself with the generalizability of study, this is the tendency that observed effects would occur outside a study (Khorsan & Crawford, 2014). This implies that external validity helps in ascertaining whether a particular research can be applied and replicated in the future. This is because; a good research should be applicable in other settings other than the particular time it was carried out. Cuncic (2019) defined external validity as the generalizability of study findings i.e. the findings being able to be applied in other settings and situations. External validity can be affected by different factors: Hawthorne effect, sampling method used the validity of the research instrument as well as the predictive degree of the instrument.
The Hawthorn effect is the behaviour exhibited by study participants due to the knowledge of involvement in a study. To minimize this Hawthorne effect, the researcher provided respondents for focus group discussions relevant information and the participants were not coerced into participating in the study against their will.

3.6 Ethics and Approval

This study was subjected to the institutional review board of United States International University- Africa for approval as well as obtaining permission too from the administrators of Nnamdi Azikiwe University before commencement of study (See appendices I and II). The respondents were briefed on the sole purpose of the study. Priority was placed on ensuring that respondents were secure and comfortable being part of the study without being coerced.

3.6.1 Consent Form

For the quantitative aspect, the researcher made available a consent form to each respondent which enabled the respondents understand the purpose of the study and willingly gave their approvals to being part of the study having read the form (See appendix V). This consent indicated that all respondents were 18 years and above and that saved the researcher the time of seeking consents from parents of the under aged. This consent form which was attached as one of the appendixes clearly provided respondents with necessary information in regards to the researcher’s purpose of the study and further enquiries to the study plus the information concerning their rights about the study and anonymity. Also, the Focus group participants were all invited prior to the date and they willingly consented to being part of the discussion without coercion.
3.6.2 Debrief Form

At the end of the exercise, all respondents were debriefed about the sole purpose for the research. Information concerning anonymity, confidentiality and respondents’ rights are contained in this form. The researcher’s contact information Chiweta-Oduah Onyinye and that of the USIU-Africa IRB department were included within the debrief form. (See appendix VI).

3.6.3 Risk to Participants and Safeguards Against Possible Risk

Respondents on this exercise stood very minimal risk of being exposed to any form of risks as their names, affiliations and names of colleagues were kept highly anonymous. Furthermore, the instruments used for data collection were pre-tested to ascertain that no harm or danger was done or posed to respondents psychologically, emotionally and otherwise during this study.

3.6.4 Anonymity and Confidentiality

The researcher ensured that all information collected from respondents were treated with utmost confidentiality to ensure the safety and welfare of each respondent, and to ensure this, the respondents were asked not to provide their names before and after the exercise only their signatures were required in the consent form. Also, the tape recordings for the focus group discussions were carefully secured by the researcher to ensure all the promises made to respondents are kept without divulging.

3.6.5 Storage and Disposal of Research Information

All materials concerning this exercise, both physical and digital scanned ones, including the consent forms were safeguarded by the researcher. The study was done by the researcher alone without research assistants, so the information generated in
the course of the study was guarded and protected by the researcher alone, thus, protecting the sources of information thereby keeping his/her words as part of the ethics, the information gathered were secured, stored in the archives of United States International University-Africa for a period of six months after which they will be permanently discarded having completed the research.

### 3.7 Data collection methods

The researcher used the Focus group discussion method to obtain information addressing objectives one, two, three and four of the study, however, question three was also addressed quantitatively to substantiate the qualitative findings. This decision was made because the researcher needed to provide answers to questions like what response strategies were used by Nnamdi Azikiwe University during the crisis. How the response strategies influenced stakeholder’s perceptions of the university? How were stakeholders involved in the implementation of these response strategies? This method was geared towards examining and understanding different stakeholder’s perceptions, this decision was also because there was need for proper understanding of the situation which quantitatively the researcher would not have understood. A total of 30 respondents were available for the Focus Group Discussion, however, 648 questionnaires were distributed among students and staff of the University to respond to the quantitative aspect of the study. The questions posed in the Focus Group Discussion were designed in an open ended format so that information concerning the response strategies used by the Institution will be extracted, including how the university communicate to their stakeholders during the cult crisis and how the identified response strategies influenced the stakeholders perception of the University’s reputation, the researcher also used the above mentioned method to elicit information concerning how and whether stakeholders were involved in the
implementation of these strategies and whether the university is responsible for the cult crisis.

The researcher formulated a Focus Group Discussion guide to assist in reminding respondents on the ground rules concerning the exercise (See appendix IV). More so, the focus group discussion questions were framed in an open ended manner for the management to enable them provide information about the Miracle junction crisis, how they communicated to various stakeholders during the crisis and the strategies they employed including obtaining information as to whether stakeholders were involved in the decision making and who was responsible for the crisis (See appendix IV). Also, a focus group discussion questions were formulated in an open ended way for staff and students of the University to help the researcher elicit information concerning the strategies the university adopted, how they perceive the University’s reputation based on the strategies in place, and how the university involved them as stakeholders. The researcher also formulated the focus group discussion demographic questionnaires for Management, staff and students to enable her understand their demographic characteristics (See appendix X).

The quantitative approach was introduced in the study addressing objective three about the attribution of responsibility to the University to help add value to the findings of the focus group discussion results. The researcher’s choice of this method was to ensure reduction of bias during data collection as it concerns the reputation of the University. This also was introduced to help ascertain validity, reliability and generalizability. The questionnaires were structured in a way that information relevant to whether the University was blamed for the cult crisis would be extracted. The Questionnaire was structured on a Likert four points rating scale type. According to DeVellis, (2016) survey questionnaire is an important tool used to get underlying
information and insights and the reasons for the phenomena under investigation. Six hundred and forty-eight (648) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents by the researcher (See appendix XII).

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis was a mixed approach. For the quantitative analysis, statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version was used for the analysis. For the qualitative analysis, the researcher used the Qualitative Data Analysis software (QDA MINER) version for the analysis. Tables and charts were used for data presentation. The researcher used the simple table constructions and percentage in presenting and analysing the variables that relate to demographic issues. The data collected from sections B of the Questionnaire were presented on the Likert four points rating scale type table.

To get the mean attribution score, the mean rating of the respondents on the four items in the questionnaire were summated, to get a composite score which ranged from 4-16 for each respondent. To convert each composite score to response scale (one-four), it was divided by number of items in the questionnaire (four).

To arrive at a decision rule, Mean score below 2.50 was interpreted as low attribution while mean score from 2.50 and above was interpreted as high attribution.

3.9 Research Procedures

Having obtained the ethics board’s approval for my research, the next step was contacting and reaching out to my Focus group participants to seek their consents and permissions. The questionnaires were also pre-tested to prove validity as well as right any wrongs that were inherent in the questions. This was followed by getting the respondents through convenience sampling. After administering the questionnaires,
the respondents were briefed on the exercise. Importantly, they were informed that this exercise had no intentions of harming anyone but was purely for research purposes and will be as confidential as possible. They were also informed not to include their names. After the exercise the respondents were debriefed and thanked. Additionally, the FGD participants were reminded of the ground rules to the focus group discussions before the exercise.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter looked at how data was collected, the instruments used in collecting data, as well as how data were analysed. The participants were selected for the qualitative study based on their background knowledge of the cult incident, on the other hand, the quantitative aspect used multistage sampling procedure which included simple random sampling and stratified method and the factors that would affect the results, the internal and external validity were all factored in, in order to prevent having inconclusive results, also, the Focus Group respondents were selected based on individual availability and acceptability to be part of the exercise. The crisis response strategies its appropriateness, stakeholder’s involvement were ascertained using the results gotten from the focus group discussion exercise while the influence of these strategies on stakeholders’ perceptions of the university were measured using a four-point Likert scale ranging from very favourable to very unfavourable as well as strongly agree to strongly disagree. Before beginning the research administration, it was subjected to the review board for analysis and approval and all other ethical considerations were factored in to ensure the successful completion of this project.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

The study sought to examine the influences of crisis response strategies on perceptions of stakeholders of organizational reputation. A case of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Cultism Crisis. Data was collected and analysed in line with the objectives and research questions of the study. This chapter presented the findings of the mixed method (Qualitative and Quantitative) used in collecting data from management, academic staff, non-academic staff and students of the University. Through the Qualitative Data Analysis miner output (QDA), analyses of the variables were revealed, (see appendix XIII). The findings were analysed as a result of the research questions that were posed in this study through the use of tables with a sample of six hundred and forty eight quantitative questionnaires and twenty eight selected persons for Focus Group Discussion involving Management, staff and students of the university. Only individuals above eighteen years of age were allowed to participate in this study and for those who agreed to participate in the study, an informed consent form was issued to them and they voluntarily participated.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics

Here the respondent’s age, gender, employment status, as well as educational level of quantitative respondents were analyzed in order to find out how people perceive situations based on different characteristics. Approximately 47.2 percent of respondents were female while the male gender comprised of 52.8 percent, 37.5 percent of respondents fell between the ages of eighteen to twenty four, 8.4 percent between the age bracket of fifty years and above, 24.9 percent of respondents were
between the ages of thirty one to 39 years, 15.1 percent between forty and forty nine years while those in the age bracket of twenty to thirty years were 14.12 percent. Also, 25.5 percent of respondents were non-academic staff, 25.2 percent academic staff while 49.6 percent of respondents were students. Finally, the distribution of university’s students by levels showed that 24.8 percent were 500 level students, 26.2 percent 400 level students, 23.5 percent 300 level and 25.4 percent 200 level students.

4.2 Crisis Response Strategies utilized by UNIZIK

4.2.1 RQ1:

This question was asked to establish the existence of crisis response strategies in UNIZIK and its appropriateness to the crisis type by the university during the crisis. Findings from the focus group analysis revealed that the university management employed the denial response strategy scapegoat and diminish crisis response strategy by blaming some persons outside the institution for being responsible for the crisis and claiming inability to control causes of crisis. This could be seen in the statements made by some members of the management team who reported that:

Management Respondent A

“Sometimes we find that because there are so many institutions of higher learning around we still found cases of one cultism or the other around, for instance the one of 28th March you find out that those involved were not students of UNIZIK as a matter of fact, some of them were from other universities where such measures have not been taken in eradicating cultism”

Management Respondent B

“So you made a special reference to the cult crisis that is the Miracle Junction sometime in 2018, Miracle Junction is not within the campus and it is outside the
campus so am using it to buttress the fact that I said that all the students do not live within the campus and is one major reason why we are not able to control their activities.”

It was revealed also that the strategy mostly adopted by the university is routine/pre-crisis instructing information as shown in the findings. Routine/pre-crisis instructing information relates to information which the university from its previous experience of cult activities and cult crisis develop and present to the students to warn them from being initiated or involved in cult activities. This theme featured in all the focus group discussions. Their statements are as follows:

Management Respondent A

“...I think that has to do with the tone of the message and at every point in time we try to reiterate safety assurance, we make our students to understand that the university and its environments are safe places where they can live, go about their normal businesses without any form of harassment and intimidation or threats to their lives, so we give them all the assurances because we have these machineries in place to that their lives are safeguarded and we achieve all through these channels of communication that we earlier mentioned the UNIZIK Commet, the university's Radio station is always active and we have programs that are quite interactive where students make some phone calls to get to know the nitty-gritty of a particular issue, where they phone in, the bottom line of what we are trying to say is safety assurance, that is the tone of the message disseminated” “The other tone of our message dissemination is to make them psychologically balanced, because if they are not safe psychologically they will not find the school environment safe for them”.

55
Management Respondent B

“Let me also talk about the orientation process, this is one of the strategies we use in checkmating cultism in the university, we start by informing and educating our freshmen on the implications of joining cultism, this information to the best of my knowledge helps some of these cultists renounce memberships from day one, so this has served as a good check against cultism, we also assist these students in coming clean by providing them with adequate security and protection”

Staff Respondent A

“In my own opinion, I will say that the strategies adopted by the University in handling the cultism crisis were the best, starting from proper orientation after admission, setting up of an efficient security outfit, involvement of the police”

These statements show that the university adopt mostly routine information in tackling the issue of cultism because most respondents revealed that they are being given a general information about the implications of cultism and the implications of being members.

Findings also revealed that the students agreed that the university did not provide them with instructing and adjusting information during the crisis, which are basic and fundamental crisis response strategies suggested by Coombs (2007) to be employed by crisis managers for this crisis type which falls under the victim cluster including victimage. The above interpretations and findings showed that Nnamdi Azikiwe University did not utilize the appropriate crisis response strategies for the crisis type.
Student Respondent A

“I actually heard of the incident from group gossips am saying that the school management did not do well about the information concerning the incident, the information I got was that UNIZIK was having a curfew that everybody should be in their houses by 8pm because of the incident”

Student Respondent B

“The question to be asked is do they have any strategy in place against cultism? Because the strategy I’ve been seeing I don’t know because they don’t tell us anything no information is being disseminated to us as students, most times we hear of these incident from gossips”

Student Respondent C

“It wasn't handled, because that particular day I was actually there, I had to run away because the anti -cult security came and was shouting and I had to run because I knew something was going on, because I knew it was a cult incident because gun shots were heard and different things (eemm) my roommate was there and they took her and ever since then I never heard anything, they said she was locked up for about two hours, I was really interested in this incident because my roommate was involved I was expecting the school as a whole to bring up a gathering concerning this to know how to work but they haven't communicated to us students anything pertaining to this issue, so am not really happy they didn't treat it well from my own perception”
4.3 Effects of Crisis Response Strategies on stakeholders Perceptions of Nnamdi Azikiwe University’s Reputation

4.3.1 RQ2:

This research question was asked to measure the effects of crisis response strategies on the university’s reputation. Findings from the this research question revealed that the staff of the university believed that the strategies had positive influences on their perceptions towards the organization, the management of the university also revealed positive influence while some students claimed that the strategies affected them positively while on the part of students who are core stakeholders in a university setting revealed negative influence. This was described in numerous ways by the participants.

Positive influence:

Staff Respondent A

“I should say that really the strategies adopted by this university really influenced the university’s reputation positively especially as regards the number of intakes in the university as opposed to the number of students intake in previous years due to the concerted efforts made by the university in ensuring safety on campus for both students staff and management of the University”

Management Respondent B

“Some other universities in the country do come here to learn the way we handle the issue of cultism, a situation whereby other universities come to the university to understudy and adopt these strategies in order to help them in combating the menace of cultism in their various universities, about three universities came to Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka last year to adopt its workable preventive and
proactive strategies in combating the menace at their universities, these universities ask us for assistance and to visit their various universities and advise their management on the strategies they should be using to curb cultism in their various universities.

Student Respondent A:

“To an extent it’s in favour of the university in the sense that we know a lot of schools in Nigeria that our parents cannot allow us to go because of security issues and all, as of 10 or 5 years ago we all know how UNIZIK was per say but the strategy adopted by the university influenced it positively, because if the school was still the way it used to be in the past years, I don't think my father would have allowed me to come to this school”.

Negative Influence

Student Respondent A

“I can say that the strategies are affecting the school negatively because so many of my friends that want to come to this school changed their minds after hearing issues of brutality, harassment”

Student Respondent B

“Yeah I think the strategies affected the university as a while, because to me I wouldn't want any of my relatives in fact I will not refer this university to them in the sense that I don't know that the system is like this, I don't like the way they handle issues, the moment I came into the university, I started seeing the issue of anti-cult brutalizing students and I started hating the school so I don't like the strategy the University uses”
4.4 Degree of Attribution of Responsibility

4.4.1 RQ3:

This Research question measured stakeholder’s feelings towards the organization’s reputation (Attribution of responsibility). Findings from the analysis showed that 42.9% of staff respondents did not blame the university, 21.4% from the management did not also attributed responsibility, while 35.7% students confirmed this too. Interestingly, majority of student’s respondents (64%) attributed responsibility to the university for the crisis. 50% of staff respondents partly blamed the university for being responsible while 50% students also did same. 75% of staff and 25% of students believed the university could do more to check the crisis by improving their crisis response strategies. Finally, 75% of students and 25% from the management blamed external factors for being responsible for the Miracle junction crisis. Some of the respondent’s statements are as follows:

Management Respondent A

“Cultism has gone beyond what is practiced in only University, most of these cultists are people who are not even students, some of these students before coming into the university must have joined cultism in the villages, some are even Okada riders, traders, so it has gone beyond what the university can handle, the fight against cultism should go beyond the university because it is a societal issue, so all hands must be on deck to fight this menace and cankerworm”

Student Respondent B

“I think charity begins at home, teach a child a way to go and when they grow they will not depart from it, I think the blame should be on the students not the university because it boils down to what the students want as persons.”
Student Respondent C

“The university may not know about what the anti-cult members are doing, I don’t think the university is involved but the university should investigate and find out what these anti-cult members are doing, so to me they are partly involved”.

Analysis of the quantitative data shown below confirmed these focus group findings that the university was not blamed for the crisis.

**Table 4.1: Mean Score on the Degree of Attribution of Responsibility for the March 28th Miracle Junction Cultism Crisis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative (n=298)</th>
<th>Student (n=297)</th>
<th>Total (N=595)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of attribution of Responsibility to the University</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result in above showed the mean score of 2.09 indicating that the degree of attribution of responsibility for the March 28th Miracle Junction Cultism Crisis to Nnamdi Azikiwe University is low quantitatively, because the decision rule stated that mean score of respondents below 2.50 would be interpreted as low attribution while mean score above 2.50 would be interpreted as high attribution.

4.5 Stakeholders involvement in the implementations of crisis response strategies by UNIZIK

4.5.1 RQ4

This Research Question measured the University’s stakeholder’s involvement in the implementation of the crisis response strategies. Findings indicated that
management respondents claimed that the University involves its stakeholders, staff respondents also proved this, however, the students revealed that the University does not and did not involve them in the implementations of these crisis response strategies used by the University for the Miracle Junction crisis. Analysis of the focus group discussions showed contradictory perceptions of stakeholder involvement by the management team and the students.

Their statements are seen below:

Management Respondent A

“Stakeholders are involved in a town hall meeting where the cards are placed on the table where suggestions are welcomed from bottom top approach and not top bottom approach to enable them suggest unanticipated methods and strategies, we do all these or better still we employ all these methods to ensure that we treat all stakeholders equally and most importantly to ensure that they are informed”

Management Respondent B

“Actually we do involve the people that are willing to maybe work with us, we involve our students by telling them that cultism is not a normal way of life and they stand to be expelled, all these we do through orientations, seminars, recently the dean has also involved the parents by calling the parents to come and join the university in knowing how far their children are placed and if they have any concerns they utilize that opportunity to lay them and in our seminar we call on the whole staff even the vice chancellor so we involve everyone around us”

Student Respondent C
“They don't let us know because if they do I wouldn't have been here and they don't involve us in anyway”. Most of the student participants equate involvement with having the necessary information.

Student Respondent D

“In my own opinion I will say that we are not involved, talking about Television, how many of us have television or maybe when the thing is done, we now get to see them, is not like they give prior information or notice to departments or faculties.”

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter availed the findings from the focus group discussions of this study and the questionnaires that were equally distributed to various respondents. The findings were mainly presented in graphs, table and also in quotes above to aide easy understanding and comprehension. These graphs, table and quotations were presented and structured according to the research questions asked by the researcher.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarized the major findings of this study as earlier indicated in the research objectives and research questions, the conclusions as well as recommendations. All these findings, recommendations, suggestions and conclusions were arrived at because the study sought to examine the crisis response strategies utilized by Nnamdi Azikiwe University during a cult crisis, its influences stakeholder’s perceptions of the university’s reputation and the involvement of stakeholders in the development and implementation of these response strategies using the qualitative and quantitative method (Mixed Method). This study also sought to find out the degree of attribution of responsibility to the University.

5.1 Discussion

The discussions of findings were solely made based on the research questions raised in the study.

Coombs (2015) asserted that crisis response encompasses what crisis managers do or say during a crisis. Priority is given to protecting stakeholders before an organization embarks on an organizations reputation. Coombs (2007) availed a set of guidelines for crisis managers to adopt in the face of an organization’s crisis. The findings indicated that Nnamdi Azikiwe University used denial and diminish crisis response strategies in responding to the Miracle Junction crisis incident. The management specifically used the scapegoat by blaming some persons outside the institution for being responsible for the crisis to reduce the reputational threat and protect their image, they also use excuses to protect their reputation by claiming
inability to control causes of the crisis. This finding is not in consonance with what Coombs 2007 asserts. Coombs (2007) asserts that instructing and adjusting information alone with victimage can be adopted by crisis managers for crisis that falls under the victim cluster.

The management were of the opinion that the response strategies they adopted were appropriate to the crisis and that they were not to be blamed for the crisis. On the other hand, the students were of the opinion that the university had not employed appropriate strategies and that they were not involved by the management. This then indicates that the university, in protecting their reputation by denying the responsibility for the violence, death, injuries and arrests of their students ignored the feelings of their stakeholders evoked by the crisis. This can cause a big threat and damage to the university’s reputation and image if not addressed.

According to Coombs, crisis managers are supposed to utilize crisis response strategies having ascertained and understood the type of crisis in order to adopt appropriate crisis response strategies to suit the crisis type. For crisis that falls under the victim crisis like that of the Miracle junction crisis, Coombs (2015) averred that instructing and adjusting information alone with victimage can be adopted.

It was evident that the University did not do a proper evaluation of the crisis hence, they were not able to understand the reputational threats that such crisis poses to the University. It also showed that they did not think of protecting their stakeholders first during the crisis, this assertion was as a result of what the students revealed as lack of communication from the management about the crisis.

Coombs (2015) averred that instructing information protects stakeholders from becoming victims through dissemination of warning messages to stakeholders.
informing them to be on alert. Since crisis creates anxiety in stakeholders, Ayoko, Ang, & Parry, 2017; Jin & Pang, 2010; Coombs and Holladay (2015) maintained that crisis communication dilutes these anxieties by providing them with adapting information on how to come during and after the crisis. These findings, were not in line with the assumptions of SCCT and findings of several scholars in this field. The university would have done the basics by ensuring proper communication to their various stakeholders about the Miracle Junction crisis, by doing so, they would have prepared them emotionally and psychologically on how to cope with the crisis all through the crisis phase and post crisis phase, instead of the two crisis response strategies that they employed. The implications of not using appropriate response crisis for a particular crisis type is that it creates in the stakeholders a feeling that the organization is not competent and is not handle the crisis, and this negative emotion from stakeholders can affect an organizations reputation which will turn to a reputational threat and crisis if not handled.

Research question two sought find out how the effects of crisis response strategies on Nnamdi Azikiwe University stakeholders’ perceptions of the organizations reputation. Hendriks (2016) asserted that organizational reputation is a perception or judgment of stakeholders about an organisations ability to create impression and value based on prior actions. Brooks, Oringe, and Ramaley (2013) postulated that stakeholder’s perception, not the organization’s reality will drive reputation. This implies that stakeholders are the ones that will determine an organization’s reputation based on the feelings they have for the organisation having accessed their prior relational relationship with them. Findings revealed that the staff, management and some students of the University felt that the strategies affected their
perceptions positively, while majority of the students who are the core stakeholders in a University revealed negative perceptions towards the University.

The reason for the negative perceptions revealed by the student respondents could be attributed to the lack of communication and inappropriate crisis response strategies they revealed the university had ignored in handling the Miracle Junction crisis. This means that organizational behaviour in times of crisis coupled with its past behaviours matters greatly.

As Coombs, (2007, p. 164) opined, “A reputation is an aggregate evaluation that stakeholders make about how well an organization is meeting their expectations based on its past behaviors”. Based on this assertion, it can be argued that Nnamdi Azikiwe staff perceived the university’s reputation favorably because they felt the university had met their expectations considering their past behaviors, on the other hand, the students of the University did not feel that the University met their expectations due to lack of communication and inadequate crisis response strategies revealed in the initial findings, hence, the negative perceptions on the University’s perception.

Kelly (2014), in her study found out that the student stakeholders perceived the reputation less favourably and had less supportive potential behaviours than the staff of the university. The findings to this research question are in consonance with that of Kelly (2014) because the stakeholders of Nnamdi Azikiwe University had different perceptions towards the University’s reputation. Conclusively, it can be said that as crisis affect stakeholder’s differently in organisations, so do crisis response strategies affect an organization’s reputation differently.
Research question three sought to explore the degree of attribution of responsibility to the University. Attribution theory is the foundation upon which SCCT is grounded and explains the inferences the stakeholders make about the cause of the crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 1996; Folkes, 1988). Rikard (2014) averred that people naturally seek explanations as to why certain things happen. This implies that the way and manner at which stakeholders observe events of an organisation influence how they judge the cause of a crisis; this could be from actions or inactions from an organisation or some persons outside the organisation.

Coombs and Holladay (2015) outlined the crisis cluster upon which attributions of responsibility is anchored by the crisis type, the Victim cluster encompasses very weak attribution of responsibility since the affected organisation is seen as also a victim of the crisis. The findings to this research question were in agreement to the above scholarly assertions, stakeholders of Nnamdi Azikiwe University did not blame the University for the Crisis because they believed that Cultism is a societal issue and as such should not be blamed on the University, the attribution of responsibility was also low because they believed that the University was also a victim of the crisis and there was no much reputational damage. Coombs and Holladay (2014) postulated that the more attribution of responsibility, the more damage to reputation evidenced.

More so, the low attribution of responsibility to the University can be likened to the fact that a good number of respondents believed that some external factors and uncontrollable factors were responsible for the Miracle junction crisis. These findings are supported in the words of Rikard (2014), when he asserted that there are two properties upon which casual attribution of an event is anchored, one, its controllability, this means the extent to which the cause is believed to be under
personal or situational control and two, its stability, this is the extent to which the cause is believed to change over time. The University could not control the causes of cultism because they found it as a societal phenomenon that is beyond the University’s control. The implication is that stakeholders no matter the magnitude of a crisis do not attribute responsibility to an organization without considering the type of crisis, prior relational relationship and the crisis history. Thus, organisations must ensure that they build positive relationship with stakeholders, consider the crisis type and the appropriate crisis response strategies to be used during crisis to ensure that their stakeholders feel right towards their organisation and as such would have protected their reputation.

Finally, research question four sought to determine stakeholder’s involvement in the implementation of these response strategies. Deloitte (2014) defined stakeholder’s involvement as a procedure adopted by organisations in order to engage stakeholders for the purpose of achieving desired outcomes. Cauberghe (2014) buttressed the benefits of crisis involvement and message framing on the effects of crisis response strategies on post-crisis response attitude towards an organisation.

The findings revealed from the students showed that the University did not involve stakeholders in the implementation of the crisis response strategies that were used for the Nnamdi Azikiwe Miracle junction crisis, these findings were not in consonance with the above assertions. The university failing to involve stakeholders in the implementation of the crisis response strategies they used led to the negative perceptions the students expressed towards the University’s reputation because they believed that the University would have been able to come up with better and accommodative strategies had they involved them. Findings also revealed that lack of
communication about the on-going crisis created a void in stakeholders and all these contradict the scholarly findings.

Gallagher (2013) maintained that in order to apply situational crisis communication strategy, the organization in question must maintain a regular dialogue with stakeholders on the prevailing situation and such communication must include necessary information on the remedial and corrective actions and the possible implications of such corrective actions. Coombs (2015) maintained that absence of communication in crisis times creates a harbinger in the process of bringing back the organization to its former glory, and that ongoing communication with stakeholders creates in them the feeling that the organization is in firm control of the situation. So for any organization or institution to maintain its reputation in the eyes of its stakeholders, it must ensure that it communicates with its stakeholders. These findings ran contrary to the above assertions because the university failed woefully in communicating with core stakeholders who are the students in a university setting. This lack of communication is a lacuna that needs to be filled in the relationship between Nnamdi Azikiwe University Management and their students.

According to Kristic (2014) organizational-stakeholder relationship that is founded on transparency and accountability is advantageous in that it reduces reputational risks, curtails underlying problems and makes solving them easier. From the University’s Management it was revealed that the management involved and still involves its stakeholders in the implementation of crisis response strategies, the staff stakeholders in the focus group discussion also agreed to this, however, from the student’s perspectives, it was deduced that the University does not involve the students in their crisis response strategies which was why the strategies used by the University negatively influenced the student’s perceptions of their reputation.
According to the implication of this is that, there is no transparency in the relationship between Nnamdi Azikiwe University management and the stakeholders and this lack of transparency if not checked can breed anger, distrust and negative emotions in stakeholders and these can affect the University’s reputation.

5.2 Conclusion

5.2.1 Inadequate response strategies by UNIZIK.

Crisis threaten the very existence of an organization. However, the way organizations handle them determines the fate of that organization especially in the face of its stakeholders. Nnamdi Azikiwe University did not appropriately handle the cult crisis because it was revealed that they employed only denial and diminish crisis response strategies in handling the Miracle Junction cult crisis which are not enough for crisis that fall under the victim cluster as stated by Coombs 2007. The university would have tried to protect their stakeholders first by ensuring that adequate information concerning the incident was disseminated to stakeholders instead they protected their reputation first. These response strategies adopted by Nnamdi Azikiwe University ran contrary to the guidelines of SCCT. Coombs (2007; 2015) asserted that informing and adjusting information alone can be enough when crises have minimal attributions of crisis responsibility (victim crises) or have no history of similar crisis. This was not the case because these were neglected by the university. Thus, in handling the crisis, they would have provided their stakeholders with information concerning the situation, steps they had taken towards solving the problem which would have enabled their students communicate back and this feedback will in turn lead to proper understanding of the strategies they had employed.
5.2.2 Negative/ Positive Perceptions by UNIZIK’s Stakeholders

These communication gaps and inappropriate crisis response strategies influenced the student’s perceptions of the organization's reputation negatively because they felt they were brutalized, harassed, and arrested unlawfully, however, there were also positive perceptions towards the organization by the management respondents and staff and these positive perceptions outweighed the negative perceptions by students which shows that the reputation is not smeared but can be if not checked by the university and this they can do through proper communication.

5.2.3 Low Attribution of Responsibility to the University

The university’s reputation also was saved because the stakeholders did not attribute responsibility to them due to the nature of the crisis and the circumstances. So the attribution of responsibility to the institution was very low and this is in consonance with Coombs assertions.

5.2.4 Stakeholder Involvement by the University

Furthermore, the contradictory responses gathered from the management, staff and student focus group respondents show that the university has to review their crisis response strategies and ensure that stakeholders especially students who are the core stakeholders in a university setting are effectively carried along during crisis and this can be achieved through communication (stakeholder’s involvement) throughout the crisis phases. Timely and consistent communications therefore appear to be a very important element during and after crisis because it’s seen as glue that holds everyone in the institution.
5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Need for proper Information by the Management

Crises in organizations are inevitable and for organizations to be able to address them properly, they must be able to provide first-hand information to various stakeholders including internal and external stakeholders. This process is called “stealing thunder” stealing thunder entails framing crisis and telling an organization’s side of the story (Claeys, Cauberghe & Leysen, 2013). In order to achieve this, Nnamdi Azikiwe University must ensure they communicate with stakeholders about any crisis that erupts in the university, this communication will help them come up with the appropriate response strategies to be employed based on the feelings of their stakeholders to the particular crisis type. They can achieve this by setting up a good crisis communication plan and crisis managers, to help relate with stakeholders and handle the crisis adequately whenever they occur.

5.3.2 Need for proper involvement of Stakeholders by the Management

There is need for UNIZIK to device an active means of engaging stakeholders. They can achieve this through creation of data base where stakeholder’s contacts, emails and addresses will be included for ease of communication. The university must ensure that stakeholders are properly involved in the implementation of their crisis response strategies through adequate communication in the three crisis phases, this involvement will make different stakeholders believe that the university is in firm control of any crisis and will go a long way in boosting their reputation and reducing negative perceptions.
5.3.3 Provision of on-campus Accommodation

Findings revealed that due to the university’s inability to accommodate students, they are not able to control their activities. The University must endeavour to provide accommodation for students to help reduce the issue of cultism.

5.3.4 Introduction of a Crisis Communication plan in the University

The university should draw a crisis communication plan which will constitute crisis managers. This will enable them know when a crisis is looming and what to do when a particular crisis erupts. This will also help them in deciding the appropriate crisis response strategies to employ during a crisis. Findings showed that the university had little or no knowledge about Situational Crisis Response Strategies and there is need for proper introduction of this theory in Nigerian Universities especially in Nnamdi Azikiwe University’s management. This will help educate them on the proper steps to be taken during a crisis in order to utilize adequate crisis response strategies

5.4 Limitations of study

Getting the focus group participants posed a big challenge to the researcher because of the sensitivity of the issue, however, the researcher promised and assured respondents that the information was solely for academic purpose and confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed.

The published articles on this particular Cult incident were not readily available because the University was reluctant in availing them, this would have helped in affirming the quantitative data the researcher had previously collected, and thus, the researcher changed the approach from quantitative to a mixed method to enable her get better insights and understanding on the subject matter.
Getting hold of the research participants for the focus group discussion was a daunting task because of their busy schedules; the researcher however, made series of calls, and sent series of text messages to these respondents to remind them.

This particular research approach was capital intensive; the researcher had to borrow money from friends and relatives to ensure that this project was completed.

5.5 Areas for Further Research

Due to time constraints and financial implications, the researcher could only study the internal stakeholders of this university; however, future research could factor in both internal and external stakeholders of this institution, as this will help provide diverse view points to the issue of strategies employed during cult crisis. These external factors might include community members, parents of the students, board of trustee members.

This study employed the quantitative method in addressing only one objective and focus group method in addressing three objectives, however, further studies could adopt only quantitative in answering all the questions this study addressed qualitatively, this will also help them analyze only figures in order to elicit desired information.

Subsequent studies could push further into other institutional crisis to ascertain the place of Situational Crisis Communication Theory in resolving conflicts between management and students, management and staff, management and host communities and students and host community.

Subsequent studies could also push for a combination of Root Cause Analysis (RCA) and Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), to help answer the question as to “why” students indulge in cultism, why cultism is rampant in most
Nigerian Universities and the place of SCCT in handling cult crisis. This suggestion is made due to the fact that understanding the root cause of a problem will help crisis managers understand the nature of a crisis and in turn help them come up with best strategies to adopt in tackling such crisis.
REFERENCES


78


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24th October, 2018

Chiweta-Oduah Onyinye
School of Communication, Cinematics & Creative Arts
umuhip@gmail.com
USIU-A/IRB/38-18

Dear Ms. Onyinye,

IRB-RESEARCH APPROVAL.

The USIU-A IRB has reviewed and granted an ethical approval for the research proposal titled “Examining the Influences of Crisis Response Strategies on Stakeholder’s Perceptions of Organizational Reputations: A Case of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Culture Crisis.”

The approval is for twelve months from the date of IRB. A Continuing Review application must be approved within this interval to avoid expiration of IRB approval and cessation of all research activities. A mid-term report and a final report must be provided to the IRB within the twelve months approval period. All records relating to the research (including signed consent forms) must be retained and available for audit for at least 3 years after the research has ended.

You are advised to follow the approved methodology and report to the IRB any serious, unexpected and related adverse events and potential unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

Should you or study participants have any queries regarding IRB’s consideration of this project, please contact irb@usiu.ac.ke.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Prof. Amon Njuguna,
IRB chair and Dean – School of Graduate Studies, Research and Extension
Tel: 730 116-442
Email: anjuguna@usiu.ac.ke
APPENDIX II: NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY APPROVAL

NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY VICE-CHAIRMAN
(ADMINISTRATION)

Tel: +234 (0)803 - 742 - 4211
E-mails: Goldencarol77@gmail.com
         Goldencarol77@unizik.edu.ng

Our Ref: ________________________ Your Ref: ________________________ Date: ___

Chiweta-Oduah Onyinye
Research Student
United State International University Africa,
Kenya

January 8, 2019

Subject: Permission for Conducting Research

Dear Onyinye,

I am pleased to inform you that the University has given you permission in respect of your research request of Examining the Influences of Response Strategies on Stakeholder's Perceptions of Organizational Reputation. A case of Nnamdi Azikiwe Cult Crisis.

We wish you all the best in your research.

Yours truly

Prof. Carol Arinze-Umobi
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration)
### APPENDIX III: DISTRIBUTION OF UNIZIKS’S FACULTIES AND DEPARTMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculties</th>
<th>Departments</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>English, Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological Science</td>
<td>Bio chemistry, Micro Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Educational Foundation, Guidance and Counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Chemical Engineering, Civil Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Sciences</td>
<td>Accountancy, Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Sciences</td>
<td>Industrial Chemistry, Science Laboratory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>Political Science, Mass Communication</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX IV: DISTRIBUTION OF NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY’S CENTRES, OFFICES AND UNITS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centres/Units/ Offices</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audit</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bursary</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centre for Entrepreneurial Studies</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centre for Early Warning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centre for Multidisciplinary Research</td>
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<td>CEP Unit</td>
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<td>Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)’s Office</td>
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<td>Exams</td>
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<tr>
<td>GSS Unit</td>
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<td>Library</td>
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<td>Medical Center</td>
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<td>Physical Planning</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Records</td>
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<td>Registrar’s Office</td>
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<td>Security</td>
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<td>SPGS</td>
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<td>Stores</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Affairs</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>University Business Ventures</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Chancellor’s Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Works</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX V: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Chiweta-Oduah Onyinye,
United States International University-Africa,
P.O Box 14634-00800,
Nairobi, Kenya.

Dear participant,

Request for project research participation

My name is Chiweta-Oduah Onyinye with student I.D number 652822, a graduate student at United States International University-Africa for Master of Arts in communications studies. I am currently doing my research proposal which examines the influence of crisis response strategies on stakeholders’ perceptions of organizational reputation: a case of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Cultism Crisis. This study seeks to find out how Nnamdi Azikiwe University management responded to the Cultism attack of March 28th 2018, whether the stakeholders where involved in the implementation of the response strategies that were used during the crisis and the influences they have on stakeholders about the institution’s reputation. Being part of the University as a Management, staff and student, I pray you to take part of this research by providing appropriate answers to the following questions.

This questionnaire only requires few minutes to complete and the response will not attract any form of benefits or compensation or any risk. For confidentiality, please do not write your name. I will appreciate your honesty in answering the questions since participation was voluntarily done. Copies of the questionnaires will be given to the United States International University-Africa Library. Thank you very much for your participation and time in the survey. I promise that all information provided in this survey will be kept confidential and used for academic purposes. For a copy of the proposal, please fill free to ask the researcher through umobip@gmail.com.

Warm Regards,

Chiweta-OduahOnyinye
APPENDIX VI: PARTICIPANT’S INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This form grants consent by signatory below for participation in this study “examining the effects of crisis response strategies on stakeholder’s perception of organizational reputation: a case of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Miracle Junction Cultism Crisis” researched by Chiweta-Oduah Onyinye for the purposes of understanding how the crisis response strategies used by this institution during crisis influences how its stakeholders perceive it.

During this study, you will be asked your views on a four-point Likert scale on the response strategies that were used by Nnamdi Azikiwe Management during the March 28th Cultism, how appropriate they were to the crisis type, the extent to which stakeholders were involved in the development and implementation of these crisis response strategies and finally whether the university is to be blamed for the crisis.

The information you will provide during this exercise will be highly confidential (sources will not be revealed) and will only be used strictly for academic purposes. All respondents participating in this study must be 18 years and above. You have every right to refrain from participating in the exercise at any time and will not be forced to continue. You will receive no benefits from participating in this study. If you have any further enquiries, please contact umobip@gmail.com.

I (participant’s Name) ______________________________ voluntarily consent to taking part in “examining the influences of crisis response strategies on stakeholder’s perceptions of organizational reputation: A case of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Cultism Crisis” conducted by Chiweta-Oduah Onyinye. (652822)

- I have read and understood the purpose, extent and nature of my involvement in this study.
- I have had opportunities to ask questions and the answers I got were satisfactory
- I have understood that any information I provide in this study shall be kept confidential and shall be solely used for academic purposes.
- I have understood that this study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB)
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the exercise at any point in time.

Participants Signature________________ Date____________________

This study has been approved by United States International University-Africa Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Master of Arts in communications studies and adheres to the academic guidelines of the ethical conduct of studies involving human subjects. You are free to discuss the results of this study with the student’s supervisor Madam Robi Koki Ochieng (contactable on or email koki_robi@yahoo.com).
Examining the effects of crisis response strategies on stakeholder’s perceptions of organizations reputation: A case of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Miracle Junction Cultism Crisis

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The general purpose of this research is to understand the response strategies utilized by Nnamdi Azikiwe University in the wake of cultism, whether their response to the crisis addressed the issue or aggravated the situation, how it influenced stakeholders’ perceptions of the university and to ascertain whether the stakeholders were involved in the development and implementations of the response strategies. Students, staff and management of this institution above 18 years of age were chosen for this study because it is believed that these individuals are part of this institution and as such will possess necessary information that is needed in this study. In this study, participants were asked to provide their views on the response strategies used by this university, how appropriate they were, how they influenced their relationships with the institution negatively or positively based on their involvement by the University’s authority. No respondent in this study will be revealed and all information gotten from these respondents will be kept highly confidential and anonymous.

The results from this study will give the researcher a clear understanding of the purpose of this study.

If you feel especially concerned about the research/project proper, please feel free to phone +254796499961 or umobip@gmail.com

Thank you for your participation in this study. If you have further questions about the study, please contact Chiweta-Oduah Onyinye via email umobip@gmail.com. In addition, if you have any concerns about any aspect of the study, you may contact Institutional Review Board for United States International University-Africa via email irb@usiuc.KE. Alternatively, you could also contact United States International University-Africa +254730116000/+254730116690.54.7

30.116.0
Facilitators welcome, Introduction and instructions to participants.

Welcome and thank you for volunteering to take part in this focus group. You have been asked to participate as your point of view is important. I realize you are busy and I appreciate your time.

This focus group discussion is designed to assess various crisis response strategies used by Nnamdi Azikiwe University management in handling the issue of cultism. The focus group will take no more than 1 hour. May I tape the discussions to facilitate its recollection? (Switch record.)

Anonymity: despite being taped, I would like to assure you that the discussion will be anonymous. The tapes will be kept safely until they are transcribed word for word, then they will be destroyed.

The transcribed notes of the focus group will contain no information that would allow individual subjects to be linked to specific statements. You should try to answer and comment as accurately and truthfully as possible.

I and other focus group participants would appreciate it if you would refrain from discussing the comments of other group members outside the focus group.

If there are any questions or discussions that you do not wish to answer or participate in, you do not have to do so; however please try to answer and be involved as possible.

GROUND RULES

The most important rule is that only one person speaks at a time. There may be temptation to jump in when someone is talking but please wait until they have finished.

- There are no right or wrong answers
- You do not have to speak in a particular order
- When you have something to say, please do so. There are many of you in the group and it’s important that I obtain the views of each of you
- You do not have to agree with the views of other people in the group
- Does anyone have any question? (ANSWERS)

LET'S BEGIN

WARM UP

I would like everyone to introduce themselves, can you tell us your name?

I am allowing you a couple of minutes to think about the cult activities in and around UNIZIK and what crisis response strategies have been employed by the University to handle this issue.

GUIDING QUESTIONS. We are here to discuss the Nnamdi Azikiwe University’s Miracle Junction Cult Crisis of March 28th 2018.

1. What in your opinion was the university’s response to the Miracle junction cult crisis of 28th March, 2018?
• How did the University handle this issue?
• What were the response strategies employed by the management in handling the crisis?
• Considering the nature of the crisis, would you say that the strategies you adopted were the best? Why do you say so?

2. Do you think the strategies adopted by the university influenced the university’s reputation? Why do you say so?

3. Before developing and implementing the strategies, did the university involve the stakeholders by way of communication during and after the crisis?
• How were you involved?

4. Do you think the university is responsible for that crisis in any way? Why do you say so?

CONCLUDING QUESTION

Apart from what we have discussed so far, are there other things you might want to add to enhance our understanding of the Miracle Junction cult crisis and the crisis resolution?

CONCLUSION

• Thank you for participating. This has been a very successful discussion.
• Your opinions will be a valuable asset to the study
• If there is anything you are unhappy with or wish to complain about, please contact umobip@gmail.com or speak to me later on 08036600408.
• I would like to remind you that any comments featuring in this report will be highly confidential and anonymous.
• Before you leave, please hand in your completed personal questionnaire.
Appendix IX: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR UNIZIK’S MANAGEMENT

Facilitators welcome, Introduction and instructions to participants.

Welcome and thank you for volunteering to take part in this focus group. You have been asked to participate as your point of view is important. I realize you are busy and I appreciate your time.

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WARM UP

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I am allowing you a couple of minutes to think about the cult activities in and around UNIZIK and what crisis response strategies have been employed by the University to handle this issue.
GUIDING QUESTIONS. We are here to discuss the Nnamdi Azikiwe University’s Miracle Junction Cult Crisis of March 28th 2018.

5. What are your thoughts on this cultism crisis in Nnamdi Azikiwe University?
   • How did the University handle this issue?
   • What were the response strategies employed by the management in handling the crisis?
   • Why did you choose the strategies?
   • Considering the nature of the crisis, would you say that the strategies you adopted were the best? Why do you say so?

6. Do you think the strategies adopted has any influence on the university’s reputation? Why do you say so?

7. Before developing and implementing the strategies, did you involve the stakeholders? (Students, staff, parents, university community)
   • How do you involve them?
   • Why did you involve them?
   • How were they involved?
   • When do you involve your stakeholder?

8. During that incident and the period of crisis resolution, you were interacting with the stakeholders; do you think they hold the university responsible for the crisis in any way? Why do you say so?

CONCLUDING QUESTION
   Apart from what we have discussed so far, are there other things you might want to add to enhance our understanding of the Miracle Junction cult crisis and the crisis resolution?

CONCLUSION
   • Thank you for participating. This has been a very successful discussion.
   • Your opinions will be a valuable asset to the study
   • If there is anything you are unhappy with or wish to complain about, please contact umobip@gmail.com or speak to me later on 08036600408.
   • I would like to remind you that any comments featuring in this report will be highly confidential and anonymous.
   • Before you leave, please hand in your completed personal questionnaire.
APPENDIX X: FOCUS GROUP DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE
MANAGEMENT

Please answer the following questions in the spaces provided, circle or tick the most appropriate options.

1. Are you (please tick where necessary)       Male       Female
2. What is your professional background
   - DVC Admin
   - DVC Academics
   - Chief Security Officer
   - Public Relations Officer
   - Dean Student Affairs
   - Registrar

Thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire.

FOCUS GROUP DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE STUDENTS
Please answer the following questions in the spaces provided, circle or tick the most appropriate options.

1. AGE ..............................................
2. Are you (please tick where necessary)       Male       Female
3. What is your educational level
   - 500 level
   - 400 level
   - 300 level
   - 200 level
   - 100 level

FOCUS GROUP DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE STUDENTS
Please answer the following questions in the spaces provided, circle or tick the most appropriate options.

1. AGE ..............................................
2. Are you (please tick where necessary)       Male       Female
3. What is your educational level
   - 500 level
   - 400 level
   - 300 level
   - 200 level
   - 100 level

Thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire
APPENDIX X: QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT (QUESTIONNAIRE)

Instruction: please indicate your answer by ticking in the appropriate box as in √

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>I. What is your gender?</th>
<th>(a) Male □</th>
<th>(b) Female □</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>II. What is your Age Bracket?</td>
<td>a) 18-24 □</td>
<td>b) 25-30 □</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>III. What is your status in the university?</td>
<td>(a) Academic Staff □</td>
<td>(b) Non-Academic staff □</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IV. What is your Marital status?</td>
<td>(a) Single □</td>
<td>(b) Married □</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V. What is your level (for students)?</td>
<td>(a) 100 level □</td>
<td>(b) 200 level □</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SECTION B Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements.
RQ: Was the University responsible for the March 28th Miracle Junction Cultism Crisis?

(ATTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>NnamdiAzikiwe University’s should be blamed for the Miracle Junction crisis.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The blame for the crisis lies in the circumstances not with the university.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The University is competent and has handled the issue of cultism adequately.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I think the University could have done better in handling the cult crisis.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX XI: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION RESPONSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>FOCUSGROUP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundational crisis response strategies</td>
<td>Instructing Information – routine</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>the moves they made towards orienting students that come into the school and several talks on orientation days and then the presence of the Anti-cult members that always reminds the students that cultism is not in any way allowed by the school</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational crisis response strategies</td>
<td>Instructing Information – routine</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>I must say kudos to the University, the various strategies adopted by the university, let me give you some examples, you see, when a student is admitted into the University, the university holds an event known as the matriculation and the student who then is referred to as the matriculant is being given orientation as per lis or her activities in the school, the dos and don’ts and then if you go to the various faculties as well, you find out that the faculties also have what we call induction wherein the student is given a further orientation on what to do and what not to do</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational crisis response strategies</td>
<td>Instructing Information – routine</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>In my own opinion, I will say that the strategies adopted by the University in handling the cultism crisis were the best, starting from proper orientation after admission, setting up of an efficient security outfit, involvement of the police</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational crisis response strategies</td>
<td>Instructing Information – routine</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>Renunciation process, induction exercise</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diminish Crisis Response Strategy</td>
<td>Scape-goat</td>
<td>FGD – Management</td>
<td>the one of 28th March you find out that those involved were not students of UNIZIK as a matter of fact, some of them were from other universities where such measures have not been taken in eradicating cultism</td>
<td>FGD - Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deny Crisis Response Strategy</td>
<td>Excuse</td>
<td>FGD – Management</td>
<td>“So you made a special reference to the cult crisis that is the miracle junction sometime in 2018, Miracle junction is not within the campus and it is outside the campus so am using it to buttress the fact that I said that all the students do not live within the campus and is one major reason why we are not able to control their activities but the university has taken steps when the issue of non-residential status was removed, hostels are now springing up including female and male hostels and they are not yet enough to accommodate about 50 something thousand students we have so we have external influences in relation to cultism”</td>
<td>FGD - Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diminish Crisis Response Strategy</td>
<td>Scape-goat</td>
<td>FGD – Management</td>
<td>Students who are not students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, they migrate from their different universities to come and form clusters around the town and from there they lunch attacks on their fellow colleagues outside not within the campus but outside, but you would discover that even the security department is very strong so strong that they carry out their surveillance both within and outside the campus that even the miracle junction outbreak or whatever conflict we saw our university security operatives in top situation trying to handle that issue, so they extend their services beyond the jurisdiction of the university and you know to be able to cover reasonably where the students are quartered around the university</td>
<td>FGD - Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deny Crisis Response Strategy</td>
<td>Excuse</td>
<td>FGD – Management</td>
<td>so, so many factors are involved, faceless persons who class themselves as students in actual fact they are labourers from Abakiliki moving and pretending to be students, some persons migrate all the way from Benin into Awka and many multi-faced human beings aggregate as cult members so that the attention that the school ought to give has been a super attention to be able to curtail the excesses of cult and cultism”</td>
<td>FGD - Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational crisis response strategies</td>
<td>Instructing Information – routine</td>
<td>FGD – Management</td>
<td>“let me also talk about the orientation process, this is one of the strategies we use in checkmating cultism in the university, we start by informing and educating our freshmen on the implications of joining cultism,</td>
<td>FGD - Management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
this information to the best of my knowledge helps some of these cultists renounce memberships from day one, so this has served as a good check against cultism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundational crisis response strategies</th>
<th>Instructing Information – routine</th>
<th>FGD - Management</th>
<th>“We also use seminars and campaigns as strategies against cultism”</th>
<th>FGD - Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundational crisis response strategies</td>
<td>Instructing Information – routine</td>
<td>FGD - Management</td>
<td>I think that has to do with the tone of the message and at every point in time we try to reiterate safety assurance, we make our students to understand that the university and its environments are safe places where they can live, go about their normal businesses without any form of harassment and intimidation or threats to their lives, so we give them all the assurances because we have these machineries in place to that their lives are safeguarded and we achieve all through these channels of communication that we earlier mentioned the UNIZIK Commet, the university's Radio station is always active and we have programs that are quite interactive where students make some phone calls to get to know the nitty-gritty of a particular issue, where they phone in, the bottom line of what we are trying to say is safety assurance, that is the tone of the message disseminated” “The other tone of our message dissemination is to make them psychologically balanced, because if they are not safe psychologically they will not find the school environment safe for them</td>
<td>FGD - Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational crisis response strategies</td>
<td>Instructing Information</td>
<td>FGD - Management</td>
<td>“We try to assure the students that their lives, properties are safe in the university, we always assure them the security personnel are 24/7 on guard and they should not entertain any fears and they should go about their normal businesses, and those outside the university are encourage to be security conscious and to report any suspicious movement around their hostels even those within the university school hostels are also told to be security conscious”</td>
<td>FGD - Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational crisis response strategies</td>
<td>No instructing information</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
<td>it wasn't handled, because that particular day I was actually there, I had to run away because the anti-cult security came and was shouting and I had to run because I knew something was going on, because I knew it was a cult incident because gun shots were heard and different things (eemm) my roommate was there and they took her and ever since then I never heard anything, they said she was locked up for about two hours, I was really interested in this incident because my roommate was involved I was expecting the school as a whole to bring up a gathering concerning this to know how to work but they haven't communicated to us students anything pertaining to this issue, so am not really happy they didn't treat it well from my own perception.</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational crisis response strategies</td>
<td>Inadequate communication</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
<td>“I actually heard of the incident from group gossips am saying that the school management did not do well about the information concerning the incident, the information I got was that UNIZIK was having a curfew that everybody should be in their houses by 8pm because of the incident</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational crisis response strategies</td>
<td>No adjusting information</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
<td>the school management are equally not doing anything about this neither do they ask of our views concerning cultism, all the students are in fear and the management is so reluctant about it”</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational crisis response strategies</td>
<td>Inadequate communication</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
<td>I think the Mass communication students should start working and ensure that information concerning the university are documented and circulated properly”</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational crisis response strategies</td>
<td>Inadequate communication</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
<td>“well to me, I don't think the school management has done enough in handling the issue of cultism because from what I gathered news from the grapevine</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational crisis response</td>
<td>Inadequate communication</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
<td>“I think to the university, they think and believe that the strategies they using are the best because I actually had from gossips not from the management</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundational</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
<td>The question to be asked is do they have any strategy in place against cultism? Because the strategy I've been seeing I don't know because they don't tell us anything no information has been disseminated to us as students, most times we hear of these incidents from gossips.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crisis response</td>
<td>communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational</td>
<td>Instructing</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
<td>like the saying goes, you can take a horse to the river but can't force it to drink water so it depends on who you are giving orientation, do they take your advice, so right now the only strategy is the anti-cult excluding the orientation so if anyone wants to be a cultist, he or she would, I think the system ought to be defined in order to know whom to blame”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crisis response</td>
<td>Information - routine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
<td>one of the problems with the university is giving out information, I feel there should be a suggestion box or a particular day should be picked for dissemination of information in departments and faculties”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crisis response</td>
<td>communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
<td>“well I will say they involve us in a way and they don't involve us too, if you talk about NAU app not everyone can afford phones to download such Apps, also there is a post called PRO they should do their jobs properly and I think there should be a functional face book page too, the students union government should also push to ensure that the students get the right information as at when due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crisis response</td>
<td>communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>FOCUSGROUP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of the influence of strategies on university image</td>
<td>Influence image positively</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>that is the system and I will tell you that till date, the number of intakes in the University with respect to students are in the increasing order, it keeps increasing year by year, we are called the University of the moment because both in learning and both in character, we are top notch in that and I must applaud the university</td>
<td>DOCUMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of the influence of strategies on university image</td>
<td>Influence image positively</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>as we speak the University has the second highest number of candidates that want to study at the university after the university of Lagos, so if the university is not safe for students in the university or for prospective students it will discourage them from enrolling into the university, so the strategies I must say are yielding positive results for the institution, thank you”.</td>
<td>DOCUMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of the influence of strategies on university image</td>
<td>Influence image positively</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>I think in my own opinion that Nnamdi Azikiwe university has gone a very long way to bring to fore its expertise in training and guiding of minds, this has gone a long way in boosting the confidence of these parents about the system the university operates. Also the fact that the university leaves no stone unturned in trying to see that the students are up and doing” “However, it could be said that the strategy might be somewhat harsh to some parents or some alleged cultists but then to a large extent, one can reasonably say that the strategy adopted by the university has given a very good reputation or image to the university and to the outside world and these results show themselves and manifest in the number of applicants that come into the university</td>
<td>DOCUMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of the influence of strategies on university image</td>
<td>Influence image positively</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>I should say that really the strategies adopted by this university really influenced the university’s reputation positively especially as regards the number of intakes in the university as opposed to the number of students intake in previous years due to the concerted efforts made by the university in ensuring safety on campus for both students staff and management of the</td>
<td>DOCUMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of the influence of strategies on university image</td>
<td>Influence image positively</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>University</td>
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<tr>
<td>I should say that the number of students intake has really increased, because recently in the recent days we are being referred to as the university of the moment and the 2nd highest sought university in the nation and I will at any given point in time refer Nnamdi Azikiwe University to my friends and folks because the university is safe and in good hands in regards to cultism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe that these strategies adopted by Nnamdi Azikiwe University in tackling the issues of cultism are best and do not have any negative influence on the way I perceive the Institution this I must confess is because the UNIZIK is regarded as a top notch University and has been soaring high in terms of its image</td>
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<tr>
<td>“In my own opinion, I believe that the strategies and the management structures put in place by UNIZIK in handling cultism in the university have been effective, this invariably has impacted positively on the reputation of the university, as you can see, security in and out the campus has been in a good state, students, lecturers community members they move around freely with no security traits in relation to cultism</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Of course, because we are proactive that is why we have not crashed, so many universities have gone under because of the activities of cultism, I don’t want to mention names but we do know that there are certain universities that children run away from because of the cult activities, so the different strategies we are using are the reasons why we are the most sought after university 2nd most sought after university in Nigeria, so it has a positive influence university has been enjoying relative peace as a result of all these strategies”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Thanks to all these strategies, everybody almost in Nigeria will always think of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, parents are all anxious to bring their students to Nnamdiazikiwe university, the university is the second most subscribed university in Nigeria according to the Federal Government of Nigeria Educational Agency in charge of conducting entrance examination for candidates who want to study in all Nigeria university called Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB)”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“yes and (eee) some other universities in the country do come here to learn the way we handle the issue of cultism, a situation whereby other universities to the university to understudy and adopt these strategies in order to help them in combating the menace of cultism in their various universities, about three universities came to NnamdiAzikiwe University Awka last year to adopt its workable preventive and proactive strategies in combating the menace at their universities, these universities ask us for assistance and to visit their various universities and advise their management on the strategies they should be using to curb cultism in their various universities”</td>
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<tr>
<td>we have not been interrupted including the academic calendar based on violence or cult related issues and there is a high number of students who wish to be admitted in the</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of the influence of strategies on university image</td>
<td>Influence image positively</td>
<td>FGD - Management</td>
<td>you now see Nnamdi Azikiwe university skiing far more than those other universities reason cult free that’s the main reason because any parent cannot allow his children go where there is cultism and security issues, so the academic calendar of UNIZIK is still running smoothly because when you have a cult rival the best solution is for the university to be shut down but nowadays we hardly hear about issues of cultism in the school, even when you hear those things, they are happenings outside the university, therefore with all these said, I think the university has good reputation</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of the influence of strategies on university image</td>
<td>Influenced image negatively</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
<td>“yeah I think the strategies affected the university as a while, because to me I wouldn't want any of my relatives in fact I will not refer this university to them in the sense that I don't know that the system is like this, I don't like the way they handle issues, the moment I came into the university, I started seeing the issue of anti-cult brutalizing students and I started hating the school so I don't like the strategy the University uses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of the influence of strategies on university image</td>
<td>Influence image positively</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
<td>to an extent it’s in favor of the university in the sense that we know a lot of schools in Nigeria that our parents cannot allow us to go because of security issues and all, as of 10 or 5 years ago we all know how UNIZIK was per say but the strategy adopted by the university influenced it positively, because if the school was still the way it used to be in the past years, I don't think my father would have allowed me to come to this school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of the influence of strategies on university image</td>
<td>Influence image positively</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
<td>“before I came into this school as a student, I actually wanted to go to another university but I couldn't because of how high cultism was rated in that school, I came here because it was so safe for me”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of the influence of strategies on university image</td>
<td>Influenced image negatively</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
<td>“the strategies the school adopted then helped before but for now they are no longer working, they should redefine the strategy, and the strategies to me influenced the school negatively”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of the influence of strategies on university image</td>
<td>Influenced image negatively</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
<td>I think I will agree that the reputation of the school is going down, because of the way Anti-cult handles the issues, more emphasis should be laid on cultism on how to handle it not how students are dressed, I think their strategies tarnished the image of the school because parents now once they hear UNIZIK they will tell you harassment, brutality”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of the influence of strategies on university image</td>
<td>Influence image positively</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
<td>“I think the school management is trying and their strategies are good, because UNIZIK as of now is one of the best schools but the problem is the anti-cult members, they should make amends”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Case</td>
<td>Text</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>No attribution of Responsibility to university</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>“I can say that the strategies are affecting the school negatively because so many of my friends that want to come to this school changed their minds after hearing issues of brutality, harassment”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>No attribution of Responsibility to university</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>“the strategies have influenced my perception of the school negatively”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>The university could do more</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>I was told the university has a high security, they teach very well and the standard very ok, but outside the school security is very poor, the strategies have negatively influenced my perception of the school and this runs contrary to what I was initially informed by friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>The university could do more</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>Unizik is among the best universities in Nigeria and so many factors contribute to that, we know there are lapses because the school cannot be perfect and we have to check the pros and cons before we talk of reputation, the strategies do not affect the school negatively</td>
<td></td>
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**Research Question 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Text</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>No attribution of Responsibility to nursery school pupils but adults so they are liable for their various actions and already have their own opinions</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>“These and other measures are what the University has put in place so far so good we have not had the issue of cultism as relates to the Miracle Junction cult crisis that happened in the past, and for now I think the university is in good hands as far as security is concerned”</td>
</tr>
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<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>No attribution of Responsibility to nursery school pupils but adults so they are liable for their various actions and already have their own opinions</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>I don’t believe that University is to be blamed for the Miracle Junction Crisis in anyway this issue of cultism as far as am concerned is a societal issue and is a problem everywhere and their activities are situated outside the university and the university cannot be blamed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>The university could do more</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>We should put efforts in order to stop it before it stops us. But if I may add, the University can check the issue of cultism by providing on campus accommodation and the use of technology can help check these students’ activities on campus which will mean easy and fast communication”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>The university could do more</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>“you see, the issue of cultism cannot be blamed on the University even though it can be argued that due to lack of on campus accommodation that the students activities are not properly checked, but the students have themselves to be blamed because they are not nursery school pupils but adults so they are liable for their various actions and already have their own opinions. NnamdiAzikiwe University to some extent cannot control the activities of these students therefore they cannot be said to be responsible for the crisis in anyway</td>
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<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>Responsibility/blame partly attributed to university</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
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<td>Responsibility/blame partly attributed to university</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>“I am of the opinion and I can say that the university is partly responsible for the crisis of the cult group in the university, the fact is that knowing fully well that this is a peer group has a big role to play though you can bring them inside the school and give them orientation after which most of them will go outside the school premises and they will re-orientate them to other younger ones and by doing so, they can now drag them to that cult group. The area (aaahh) not having enough hostels in the university is the area I said that the university management are responsible for the cult crisis partly”</td>
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<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>No attribution of Responsibility to university</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>“I doesn’t think the University is responsible for the cult crisis, my reason is because most cult members (guys) start join these groups from secondary schools even in villages, these people form and join cultism, sometime ago in awka here, there is a lot of cult wars in the villages, most of our politicians and the people used to set up these guys fund them and encourage them to join cults so they can use them to protect their interests, so I don’t think the university is responsible and is to be blamed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>No attribution of Responsibility to university</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>the University cannot categorically be said (I mean) share in any part of the blame whatsoever as regards the crisis of 28th cult crisis, (eemmm) let me tell you what a cult group is, being a cultist is belonging to a group that has extreme beliefs” “one needs to go down to the social status of the persons which are the families, parents are failing in their duties nowadays and also the religious leaders are to be blamed for issue of cultism because churches are busy looking for monies and they have lost drive and failed in their moral duties towards these student, this great university has put adequate measures in place to ensure that cultism is curbed and they can’t be said to be blamed for cultism in anyway in curbing cultism&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>No attribution of Responsibility to university</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>“In my opinion, the issue of cultism cannot be blamed on the University rather it all boils down to the society where the student comes from, I don’t think the university should be blamed for cult activities in the sense like as already pointed out, we are talking about adults here, cultism is a decision adults make whether the person was forced to do so or not is no longer the issue the point is that the university does not have any say to whether an individual is joining a particular or the mannerism of joining such cult”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>Responsibility/blame partly attributed to university</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>If I should say in addition, the university does not share in the blame fully because this (eemmm) is a societal problem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>No attribution of Responsibility to university</td>
<td>FGD - Management</td>
<td>“No nono, they don’t because that’s is the benefit of getting them involved from the onset, because this help them to caution their children, they begin to monitor their children knowing that the consequences may be adverse and even affect them, for instance when you have given the children the opportunity to denounce membership of cultism before the parents, priests and before the lecturers and entire university community”</td>
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<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>No attribution of Responsibility to university</td>
<td>FGD - Management</td>
<td>they know that cultism has been a cancer that is trying to you know engulf members of the society so they cannot claim ignorance of the presence of occultism at the society level as against cultism in the university level, occultism is more deadly than cultism at the tertiary institution, so our stakeholders will not hold us to contempt rather they are should be aware that they at their best trying to calm the situation and problem down”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>No attribution of Responsibility to university</td>
<td>FGD - Management</td>
<td>“yeah, there is no blame, any decision taken by the university based on this aspect because (eemmm) before anything is being done by the university they must have given (eemmm) taken all these steps as accepted by the general bodies”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>External factors to be blamed</td>
<td>FGD - Management</td>
<td>“Cultism has gone beyond what is practiced in only University, most of these cultists are people who are not even students, some of these students before coming into the university must have joined cultism in the villages, some are even Okada riders, traders, so it has gone beyond what the university can handle, the fight against cultism should go beyond the university because it is a societal issue, so all hands must be on deck to fight this menace and cankerworm, thank you”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>Attribution of responsibility/blame to university</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
<td>“yes because you cannot employ cults in fight against cultism because it doesn't happen that way, I think the university is to be blamed”</td>
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<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>Attribution of responsibility/blame to university</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
<td>“the university is to be blamed because they are involved in the cultism due to their strategies”</td>
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<td>Attribution of Responsibility</td>
<td>Responsibility/blame partly attributed to university</td>
<td>FGD - students</td>
<td>“the university may not know about what the anti-cult members are doing, I don't think the university is involved but the university should investigate and find out what these anti-cult members are doing, so to me they are partly involved”</td>
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<tr>
<td>University stakeholder involvement</td>
<td>Legal officer is involved</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>as a legal officer in the university the university has not left any stone unturned in getting to legal unit informed of any crime that cropped up in the university, so as a legal officer, the unit is very much aware and is involved in these cases of crime especially that of cultism, so to a large extent the university has always put us on notice about these cases and has always asked for our opinions and then other advice that would offer as experts in that area”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>University stakeholder involvement</td>
<td>Partly involves stakeholders</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>the university tries to carry stakeholders along in their effort to curb cultism at it various campuses, consciously or unconsciously</td>
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<td>University stakeholder involvement</td>
<td>students are involved</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>“I think I have hammered on this question when I made a reference to the system of operation here in the university, I talked about the students being charged from the very first point they enter into the university at the matriculation exercise, they are being told what they ought to do and what no to do, and then made mention of having the Dean of student affairs who oversees the students activities as well as liaises back with the university, government of the university and then we also have the council in administration and they seat and talk about problems surrounding the university and students as well when you talk about the strategies the university employed in combating cult activities in UNIZIK is almost 90%”.</td>
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<td>University stakeholder involvement</td>
<td>University involves its stakeholders</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>the university involves its stakeholders in its effort to curb cultism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>University stakeholder involvement</td>
<td>Parents not involved</td>
<td>FGD - Staff (Academic &amp; Administrative)</td>
<td>as far as am concerned, the university neglects an important segment of the stakeholders that should be carried along in its quest to curb or manage cult crisis, the stakeholders that I have in mind are the parents and students.</td>
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<td>Parents are involved</td>
<td>FGD - Management</td>
<td>“as I said earlier when we all these (ee) some of these strategies including renunciation or what have you involve invitation of parents of these children for them to come and witness what the university is doing and these parents go out and they are happy because some of these parents do not know what their children are doing and because of that consciousness the parents will begin to monitor their children right from home to know when these children begin to derail, so there is no stakeholder that is not involved or that is not aware of what the university is doing, we even go as far as inviting the National Universities Commission to come witness what we do”.</td>
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<td>University involves its stakeholders</td>
<td>FGD – Management</td>
<td>stakeholders are involved in a town hall meeting where the cards are placed on the table where suggestions are welcomed from bottom top approach and not top bottom approach to enable them suggest unanticipated methods and strategies, we do all these or better still we employ all these methods to ensure that we treat all stakeholders equally and most importantly to ensure that they are informed”</td>
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<td>University stakeholder involvement</td>
<td>Student union government is involved</td>
<td>FGD – Management</td>
<td>we don’t just take decisions because sometimes these students decisions are taken far back even before their parents are informed of their involvements in cultism, even some students union government are also involved in the decision, everybody’s decision is needed and sought before they can now take action”</td>
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<td>Parents are involved</td>
<td>FGD – Management</td>
<td>actually we do involve the people that are willing to maybe work with us, we involve our students by telling them that cultism is not a normal way of life and they stand to be expelled, all these we do through orientations, seminars, recently the dean has also involved the parents by calling the parents to come and join the university in knowing how far their children are placed and if they have any concerns they utilize that opportunity to lay them and in our seminar we call on the whole staff even the vice chancellor so we involve everyone around us”.</td>
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<td>University stakeholder involvement</td>
<td>University involves its stakeholders</td>
<td>FGD – Management</td>
<td>“everybody is involved in the constitution of these strategies”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University stakeholder involvement</td>
<td>Students not involved</td>
<td>FGD – students</td>
<td>“they involved us, they involve us through television after they must have carried out the operations but before implementing and developing their strategies they don’t”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University stakeholder involvement</td>
<td>Students not involved</td>
<td>FGD – students</td>
<td>“in my own opinion I will say that we are not involved, talking</td>
</tr>
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<td>University stakeholder involvement</td>
<td>Partly involves stakeholders</td>
<td>FGD – students</td>
<td>“I will say to me, the university are trying their best in some areas because when we entered as fresh students we were given orientation but some didn't attend, they also give us security handouts to guide our operations in the school but now these handouts are no longer given us the school should engage us in everything they do because this is our lives, they should take the issue of orientation very serious”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University stakeholder involvement</td>
<td>Students not involved</td>
<td>FGD – students</td>
<td>“They don't let us know because if they do I wouldn't have been here and they don't involve us in anyway”</td>
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<td>University stakeholder involvement</td>
<td>Students not involved</td>
<td>FGD – students</td>
<td>“They are not involving us in any way and they should try and use bulletins, newspapers and involve us”.</td>
</tr>
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<td>University stakeholder involvement</td>
<td>Students not involved</td>
<td>FGD – students</td>
<td>“I think am one of the students that can pay to get information, so the university is not doing what they are supposed to be doing”.</td>
</tr>
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<td>University stakeholder involvement</td>
<td>Partly involves stakeholders</td>
<td>FGD – students</td>
<td>“In my own opinion, I think the issue we are having is information dissemination, the university to some extents has created a mobile app NAU MOBILE APP, I got to know about it through a friend and I downloaded it and if this information was disseminated in the right way I believe most people would be abreast of the happenings in the university, so the university should try and do their job by ensuring that information is properly disseminated to its stakeholders. So to an extent, the school involves its stakeholders the problem is just their employed staff”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University stakeholder involvement</td>
<td>Students not involved</td>
<td>FGD – students</td>
<td>“One of the problems with the university is giving out information, I feel there should be a suggestion box or a particular day should be picked for dissemination of information in departments and faculties”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University stakeholder involvement</td>
<td>Partly involves stakeholders</td>
<td>FGD – students</td>
<td>“Well I will say they involve us in a way and they don't involve us too, if you talk about NAU app not everyone can afford phones to download such Apps, also there is a post called PRO they should do their jobs properly and I think there should be a functional face book page too, the students union government should also push to ensure that the students get the right information as at when du”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>