

**INFLUENCE OF CRISIS COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES ON  
STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTION OF DANA AIR REPUTATION  
AFTER THE 2012 PLANE CRASH**

**BY**

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**CERTIFICATION**

I certify that this study was carried out by Daniel Ikesinachi NWOGWUGWU,  
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.....

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## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to the memory of all 153 people who died in the June 3, 2012  
Dana Air plane crash in Lagos State.

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## ABSTRACT

The vulnerability to crisis of the aviation industry requires prompt preparedness to handle a crash at a moment's notice, especially by providing appropriate and effective communication responses. Previous studies on aviation accidents have focused on strategies employed in the management of crises, with little attention paid to how these strategies have influenced stakeholders' perception of the airlines' reputation after the crises. This study was, therefore, designed to examine the Crisis Communication Strategies (CCS) employed by Dana Air to manage the 3 June 2012 plane crash in Lagos, Nigeria, with a view to determining their influence on stakeholders' perception of the airline's reputation afterward.

The Situational Crisis Communication and Stakeholder theories served as the framework, while the exploratory sequential mixed-methods design was adopted. Stakeholders of Dana Air were stratified into primary and secondary. Key informant interviews were conducted with the following primary stakeholders, who were purposively selected based on their knowledge and expertise on aviation matters: two spokespersons of the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria, the spokesperson of the Accident Investigation Bureau, two former members of the external public relations agency, a former staff of Dana Air and the aviation editors of four newspapers who covered the incident of the crash. A 12-item questionnaire was administered to 42 available passengers – secondary stakeholders – of Dana Air who had flown with the airline after the crash. In addition, 36 news reports from *The Guardian* (22) and *Punch* (14) from 4 to 30 June 2012, the newspapers' coverage period, were analysed. Qualitative data were thematically analysed, while quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics.

Dana Air employed 10 CCS, which are instructing and adjusting information, confirmation, empathy, commitment/assurance, compensation, victimage, apology, justification, reminder and ingratiation to influence stakeholders' perception of its reputation after the 3 June 2012 plane crash. Provision of instructing and adjusting information, compensation, commitment/assurance, and communicating with empathy were the frequently employed CCS that portrayed Dana Air as fully responsive and committed to fulfilling the promises made during the crisis. Also, the airline reacted swiftly during the crisis by providing constant information to the public and managed the media fairly by streamlining the release of information through the Corporate Communication Department to avoid ambiguity. Consequently, Dana Air's license was restored after preliminary investigations revealed nothing wrong with the crashed aircraft. The passengers had a positive perception of the Airline's reputation based on quality and satisfactory services (91.0%), safety (67.0%) and concern for the risks and safety of flying their aircraft (91.0%). The passengers would patronise Dana Air if they admitted their errors (81.0%) and believed the airline displayed a fairly positive communication competence (52.3%). However, there were low perceptions of Dana Air's innovation level (38.1%) and awareness of corporate social responsibilities (33.3%).

The crisis communication strategies employed by Dana Air in the aftermath of the 3 June 2012 plane crash played a crucial role in the renewed and sustained confidence of the stakeholders in the airline.

**Keywords:** Crisis and crisis communication strategies, Stakeholders and organisational reputation, Dana air, Nigerian aviation sector

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ACG: Aviation Consulting Group

AIB: Accident Investigation Bureau

Capt: Captain

CEO: Chief Executive Officer

CVR: Cockpit Voice Recorder

FC: Flight Captain

FO: First Officer

IFR: Instrument Flight Rules

NCAA: Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority

P.F.: Pilot Flying

MMA2: Murtala Muhammed Airport Terminal 2

SCCT: Situational Crisis Communication Theory

VMC: Visual Meteorological Conditions

NSTB: U.S. National Safety Transportation Board

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

On Sunday, June 3rd, 2012, a flight 0922 Boeing McDonnell Douglas (MD-83) local commercial flight with registration number 5N-RAM, operated by Dana Airlines Nigeria Limited (henceforth referred to as Dana Air), departed Abuja (ABV) for Lagos (LOS), Nigeria. The plane reportedly struck an uncompleted building, two trees, and three other buildings and crashed into the populated Iju-Ishaga area of Lagos State, Nigeria, precisely around 3:45 pm (Baron, 2017). The crash led to the death of all 153 passengers on board, including two (2) pilots, 1 Air Flight Engineer, 4 Cabin Crew, and ten (10) people on the ground (Dana Air Press Release, June 2012). Findings from the 2017 report of the investigation carried out by the Accident and Investigation Bureau (AIB), the organisation saddled with investigating plane crashes in Nigeria, revealed probable human errors. The aftermath of this crash led to crisis and litigations for Dana Air and seemingly damaged its image and reputation. It also became an example of how quickly crisis news spread, primarily through (social) media.

Airline accidents are unfortunate yet sad occurrences recorded worldwide since the early days of aviation history (Ray, 1999 cited in Zafra and Maydell, 2018). However, compared to accidents from other means of transportation, airline crashes (accidents) are usually rare (Chang and Yeh, 2004, cited in Chang, Yeh and Wu, 2018). Nevertheless, the effects of plane crashes are extremely devastating as they often result in loss of lives, damage to property and attract media attention and inquiry from the public. Chang et al. (2018) posit that plane crashes often create serious crises with severe consequences for the airlines and organisations involved. Inevitably, these crises become public through the media (traditional and social) as chances of such incidents escaping the media's attention have become much smaller (Anthonissen, 2008; Adebayo, 2017). With the advancement in technology, organisations have

undoubtedly been at higher risk of being exposed to crises. Perrow (1999), cited in Alexander (2010:13), argued that "as technology continues to advance and as our population continues to grow, we are increasingly exposed to and affected by crisis that we could not have imagined 20 or 30 years ago." The above statement from Alexander (2010) implies that the chances of crises will continue to increase as long as humans and organisations grow in a global society that depends on the services of technology.

Consequently, organisational crises are inevitable as organisations cannot avoid or prevent crises entirely. Coombs (2010) reiterated that crises are unusual and unexpected events that cannot be predicted but involve significant threats. Similarly, Mitroff and Anagnos (2000), cited in Kelley (2014), believe crises are inextricably linked to modern societies. That is, crises exist within societies as modern societies cannot but experience crises. As such, Regester and Larkin (2005) assert that there is hardly any organisation safe from a crisis, regardless of financial status, reputation, or influence. The above statement implies that crises, though unexpected, can occur. However, when they occur, they usually pose disastrous, most times, negative results to victims, the organisation, and the stakeholders.

Many parts of the world, including Nigeria, are affected by crises, which have become rapid incidents in the organisation's life-cycle. These crises no longer occur randomly but are rather daily occurrences that have become an inevitable and natural feature of our existence (Kyhn, 2008). It is assumed that a day hardly goes without the news of a new crisis or the escalation of a previous one (Nwogwugwu, 2021). These crises range from natural disasters, environmental pollution, product recalls, religious crisis, human-made catastrophes, racial conflicts, political crises, airline crashes, terrorism, food poisoning, among several others.

Globally, organisations have faced and are still facing crises with potential reputation damage. Sadly, there have been overwhelming cases of different types of crises worldwide. For instance, the United States of America (USA) in 2008 experienced what Alexander (2010) described as the most substantial economic crisis since the Great Depression. This economic crisis had a spiral effect on almost all major financial institutions in the U.S, with its ripple effect felt across the world, leading to a global recession. Also, in 2009, Toyota, known as one of the best manufacturers of cars in the

U.S, had to recall about 5.4 million Avalon brands due to floor-mat entrapment, which led to accidents and loss of lives reported across the U.S (Knoespel, 2011). Furthermore, an intentional food contamination outbreak (increase in the levels of melanin that helps to increase protein levels in milk powder products, including baby formula) from Sanlu, a Chinese food company, in 2008, led to the death of 6 children and illness to over 300,000 worldwide (Alexander, 2010). Also, the B.P oil spill crisis was described as an enormous maritime disaster oil spill in the United States of America (Mejri and De-Wolf, 2013).

In Nigeria, several organisations have faced crises with potentially harmful reputational damage. For instance, De-United Foods Industry Limited (DUFIL), the manufacturers of Indomie Noodles in Nigeria, had in May 2004 experienced a crisis after reported deaths and injuries to consumers who allegedly consumed what Nigerians described as the "killer noodles." Also, the airline industry in Nigeria experienced a series of plane crashes that led to crises for such organisations. Prominent airline organisations involved in plane crashes were Bellview Airline, Aviation Development Company (ADC) Airline, Sosoliso Airline, and Dana Airline. These plane crashes, recorded from 2005 till 2012, led to the death of hundreds of passengers and created major crises for their management. Before 2005, however, other plane crashes recorded in Nigeria include the ADC Airline crash in Lagos in 1996, EAS Airline crash in Kano in 2002, with reported deaths of almost all the passengers on board.

Crises usually have some adverse effects when they occur. Massey and Larsen (2006), cited in Kiambi and Shafer (2016), observed that some of the impacts of crises include, but are not limited to, death of victims, loss of reputation, stakeholder discontent, decreased employee morale, loss of market share to competitors, increased regulatory enquiry and control, bankruptcy and organisational failure. These crises also attract wide media (traditional and social) attention and could ultimately threaten the organisation's reputation. Among these adverse crisis effects, crisis communication scholars have widely investigated the reputational damage occasioned by crises in crisis communication discourse. The focus on reputation became necessary as an organisation's reputation is an intangible asset that could be damaged during a crisis.

According to Coombs (2007), a reputation is a collective assessment by stakeholders of how successfully organisations accomplish their goals. Similarly, Fombrun, cited in Kyhn (2008:7), described an organisation's reputation as "a perceptual representation of a company's past actions and future prospects that describe the firm's overall appeal to all of its key constituents when compared to other leading rivals." The statement means that an organisation's reputation is the perception that stakeholders have or hold, which is formed by how well the organisation meets their (stakeholders) expectations and can influence their behaviour towards the organisation. Hence, there could be favourable and unfavourable reputations. Therefore, crisis communication researchers agree that when organisational crises are not well managed, they could negatively affect its reputation (Coombs, 2006, 2007; Ulmer, Sellnow and Seeger, 2010; Claeys and Cauberghe, 2012; Ziek 2015).

Therefore, a crisis's unpredictable but expected nature places adequate demand on the need to respond - a commitment to provide information. As a result, effective communication plays a critical role when responding to crises (Barton 2001; Fearn-Banks 2002; Coombs, 2009). The primary focus of communicating during a crisis is to avoid misinformation. Organisations in crisis have a responsibility to their stakeholders to respond to crises by sharing information about the issue to minimise reputational harm. Besides providing crisis information to stakeholders, Sellnow, cited in Coombs (2007), posited that stakeholders also want to know what efforts have been made to protect them from future crises and defend their interests. Hence, communicating with stakeholders before, during, and after crises are top priorities for organisations.

Nonetheless, Coombs (2004) affirmed the effectiveness of communication in militating against reputation damage when he opined that an organisation's response to a crisis could either improve or worsen the crisis and further influence stakeholders' perceptions of the crisis. Therefore, he defined crisis communication as "the collection, processing and dissemination of information required to address a crisis situation" (Coombs 2010:20). Thus, providing information and communicating such information during a crisis is essential. To this end, crisis communication scholars place more emphasis on what organisations in crisis can do and say to address a crisis and how communication "can be used to influence public's perception of the crisis and the organisation involved in the crisis" (Coombs and Holladay, 2014:42). Best practices in



crisis communication stress the importance of proactive communication during a crisis. Also, crisis communication scholars believe that, during crises, organisations that are not proactive or strategic in their communication by openly sharing information with stakeholders will lose their credibility. Organisations will lose their credibility as stakeholders will likely receive crisis information from other available sources. In addition to receiving crisis information from other open sources, Seeger (2006), cited in Claeys, Cauberghe and Pandelaere (2016), adds that such organisation (s) will lose its/their ability to manage the crisis message.

However, dealing with a crisis goes beyond communicating with stakeholders. It necessitates that crisis managers must carefully craft the messages that would be disseminated to stakeholders. As Macfarlane (2010) cited in Olawale (2014) observed, an organisation's ability to successfully craft message strategies is the differentiating factor between an organisation that can manage the unpredictable state of affairs from others that allow crises to diminish their strategic goals. Since crises can potentially harm the organisational reputation and affect diverse stakeholders, crisis communication scholars agree that using communication strategies to respond to crises can heighten or reduce the perceived threats to organisational image and reputation.

As Coombs (2007) noted, a crisis response strategy is a type of crisis communication that looks at how organisations respond to the public and how these messages are strategically used to repair their reputation. Coombs, Frandsen, Holladay and Johansen (2010:337) further believe that crisis responses can "either improve or make the crisis situation worse for a corporation and its various stakeholders," as the response strategy could be the difference between the success and failure of managing the crisis. Also, having effective crisis communication strategies has significant impacts on both the crisis and the organisation. Hence, Adebayo (2017) posited that stakeholders' understanding of crises revolves around the information presented to them, either from the organisation or other available sources, with clear expectations of effective crisis management.

Various scholars have developed different strategies when responding to crises, some of which are morphed into theories employed in dealing with crises and their effect on stakeholders. For instance, the Corporate Apologia theory comprises communication strategies that focus on organisations apologising for wrongdoings to maintain their

image or reputation. Also, the image repair/restoration theory provides communication strategies that crisis managers can use when seeking to understand and examine how specific strategies can and should be used to respond to crises. Furthermore, one of the most widely cited crisis communication theories, the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), focuses on matching crisis communication strategies with different crisis types based on attributions of crisis responsibility. The SCCT is also a framework for "understanding how stakeholders will react/respond to a crisis in terms of reputational threat and projects how people will react to the crisis response strategies used to manage the crisis" (Coombs 2007:163). Another crisis theory with communication strategies is the Organisational Renewal Theory, a post-crisis theory that emphasizes the strategies available to organisational crisis managers to learn and grow from crises and inherent opportunities in crises. These crisis theories provide different communication strategies necessary in responding to crises.

As much as a reputation is essential for airline organisations, withholding information during a crisis could be worse. For instance, if lives are lost from plane crashes, withholding information could lead to litigation, crises and ultimately signal the end of such an organisation. Since plane crashes are inevitable, it becomes necessary for airline organisations to respond strategically to stakeholder concerns when plane crashes occur. Thus, airline organisations must prove and assure their present and future customers of safety. When airline organisations are unable to assure stakeholders of their safety, it could affect their financial viability and may potentially lead to reputation loss and could signal the end of such airline organisations (Hodgson, Al Haddad, Al Zaabi, and Abdulrahim, 2015 cited in Zafra and Maydell, 2018). One example of an airline organisation involved in a crisis following a plane crash was Spanish airline, *Spanair*. After the crash of Flight 5022 in 2008, *Spanair* lost its reputation, encountered financial difficulties, stakeholders lost faith in the airline and blamed the organisation for withholding information during the crisis and ultimately, leading to the organisation's closure (Garcia-Santamaria, 2010).

In light of the background, this study investigates how Dana Air managed the 2012 plane crash crisis by reviewing the crisis response (communication) strategies used in responding to the crisis. The Dana Air case was purposively chosen for this study as crises of this nature often lead to negative reputation damage and signal the end of such organisations. Also, crises of this nature often create wide media attention -

nationally and internationally. However, despite the realities of plane crash crisis, Dana Air was able to recover from the crisis and is still in operation to date. In fact, in October 2018, six years after the ill-fated air crash, Dana Air won the Best Customer Service Airline Award of the Year. More so, there are few documented studies in Nigeria that critically discuss crises, especially those that resulted from airline crashes. The analysis will further extend to stakeholders who reacted to the crisis, its strategies, and their current perception of the reputation of Dana Air.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Plane accidents are often tragic that garner much attention from the media, the government, and other stakeholders. These plane crashes also threaten the existence of the affected airline organisations and confront them with grievous challenges, such that the crises in which they are engulfed often test their abilities to manage the situation. During crises, airline organisations attempt to protect their long-term reputation, stakeholders, and investments by employing several communication strategies to manage such incidents. Crisis communication scholars have described crisis communication strategies as critical components in crisis management as the choice of strategies is essential to organisations' survival or otherwise. Perhaps, this is one of the reasons for the dominance of crisis response strategies studies in crisis management research.

Despite the dominance of crisis response strategies in crisis communication and management research, the findings reveal diverse categorizations and several inconsistencies. For instance, little is known about the stakeholders and their role in the crises. In addition, the few studies which focused on the stakeholders found many of the stakeholder groups having a single perspective. Furthermore, only few studies have attempted to understand the impact of crisis communication strategies on the stakeholders. Coombs (2007) noted that the more an organisation was perceived to be responsible for acts that led to a crisis, the greater the reputational damage. Hence, several studies have found crisis communication strategies as having strategic influence on the reputation of organisations.

Previous studies on aviation accidents have focused on the strategies employed in the management of crises, with little attention paid to how these strategies have influenced

stakeholders' perception of the airlines' reputation after the crisis. This study was, therefore, designed to examine the crisis Communication Strategies (CCS) employed by Dana Air to manage the 3 June, 2012 plane crash in Lagos, Nigeria, with a view to determining their influence on stakeholders' perception of the airline's reputation afterward.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

As earlier stated, this study focused on the crisis communication strategies employed by Dana Air in managing the 2012 airline crash and how these strategies influenced stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation seven years after the crisis. Hence, the central research question generated for this study is: How did Dana Air employ crisis communication strategies in managing its reputation after the 2012 plane crash? In answering the broad primary question, it became pertinent first to understand the crisis response strategies adopted by Dana Air. The crisis communication strategies found will then be used to examine its influence on stakeholder's perceptions of Dana Air's reputation. Therefore, the following sub-research questions were raised:

1. To what extent did Dana Air employ crisis communication strategies in dealing with the 2012 plane crash crisis?
2. Which of the Dana Air crisis communication strategies were most effective?
3. To what extent did Dana Air crisis communication strategies correlate with the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) recommendations?
4. What strategies did Dana Air employ in rebuilding its relationship with stakeholders after the crisis?
5. How did the crisis communication strategies influence stakeholder perceptions of Dana Air reputation?

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

Studies on crisis communication and response strategies have been primarily dominated by experiments and case studies that sought to determine organisational responses to crises (An and Cheng, 2010; Holladay, 2010; Kelley, 2014, Claeys and Cauberghe, 2015; Adebayo, 2017; Nwogwugwu, 2018). However, most of these studies were conducted in Western countries with little focus on Africa. Also, little

scholarly attention has been given to the discourse in Nigeria. Thus, this study investigates a Nigerian crisis case - the Dana Air plane crash - in Lagos on June 3rd, 2012. It is expected that findings from this study will reveal the strategies employed to deal with a crisis of this magnitude where lives were lost and property destroyed. The case was chosen because apart from the media attention the crisis got, the organisation recovered from the crisis and is still in operation to date. The overall objective of this study was to comprehensively examine how Dana Air employed crisis communication strategies in managing its reputation after the 2012 plane crash. These strategies were used to determine stakeholders' perceptions of the crisis and the reputation of Dana Air. Therefore, the objectives of this study are:

1. To investigate the extent to which Dana Air employed crisis communication strategies in dealing with the 2012 plane crash crisis.
2. To analyse the most effective crisis communication strategies evident in Dana Air's response to the crisis
3. To evaluate the extent to which Dana Air's communication strategies correlated with the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) recommendations.
4. To investigate the rebuilding strategies employed by Dana Air in rebuilding its relationship with its stakeholders after the crisis
5. To analyse how the crisis communication strategies influenced stakeholder's perceptions of Dana Air's reputation

The achievement of these objectives will provide a pathway for the intersection between theory and practice. The findings from this study will also contribute to the growth of the SCCT by providing a Nigerian crisis case to the global theory.

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

Although crises are trying moments for organisations, they can also be defining moments in organisations' life-cycle. The way an organisation handles a crisis will, to a large extent, determine how stakeholders will also perceive the crisis. Extant literature shows that organisations in crisis must always communicate before, during, and after crises. While many crisis communication studies have been conducted in developed and most developing nations, the same cannot be said of a country like

Nigeria, where crises are almost a recurring daily phenomenon with little crisis information. Therefore, this study would provide a basis for an in-depth and comprehensive review of a crisis case, especially with airline crashes in Nigeria.

This study is significant in several ways. First, it will be helpful to crisis managers and crisis management teams as it will assist them in preparing and planning for crises. The literature review and findings from this study will create awareness of the crisis strategies available to crisis managers when responding to crises by matching crisis types with strategies. Also, crisis managers will understand the different stakeholder dynamics during crises, which is against the belief that all stakeholders will have the same perspectives.

Also, this study will benefit public relations practitioners in the development of message strategies during crises. The importance of crafting relevant message strategies cannot be over-emphasised. Thus, the application of the SCCT will assist public relations practitioners in determining how stakeholders would react during each type of crisis. The SCCT forecasts how stakeholders will react/respond to a crisis and the strategies employed to manage crises.

As an organisation, the findings from this study will benefit Dana Air as it will reveal selected stakeholders' perceptions of their reputation. The findings will reveal passengers' opinions towards the different indices used in measuring reputation. Some of these indices include quality of services, level of innovation, customer satisfaction, corporate social responsibility, effective communication, emotional appeal, and the quality of management abilities. Dana Air can use the findings of this study to formulate promotional programs to further enhance its reputation with stakeholders. It will also expose the organisation to scholarly discourse.

Additionally, this study will benefit the Nigerian aviation sector as empirical reviews will show how aviation industries in other countries handled similar crises. Findings from this study will serve as a foundation for assisting the Nigerian aviation industry in managing similar crises in Nigeria. Through stakeholder mapping, the aviation industry will also gain insights into how stakeholders make sense of crises and likely strategies to deal with aviation crises.

The Nigerian government, and the Ministry of Aviation, in particular, will also benefit from this study as findings will help them formulate relevant and clear policies for the

aviation sectors. Hence, applicable policies could be implemented to protect the interests of the various stakeholder groups.

This study will also help bridge the gap between stakeholder perceptions of crisis communication in Nigeria. It will add to the growing global literature on stakeholder perceptions of crises while contributing to Nigerian research on stakeholders' perceptions of crises.

Also, the findings from this study are beneficial to the media. The media are considered crucial stakeholders during crises as their reportage of crises could also affect stakeholders' perceptions. Hence, findings will reveal existing relationships between organisations in crisis and the media.

Finally, the findings that will emanate from this study will assist in the refinement and advancement of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) in managing a plane crash crisis in Nigeria. The SCCT, which has been described as a global theory, has little empirical evidence from Nigeria. Hence, findings from this study will reveal the suitability of the SCCT to a crisis in the Nigerian context.

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

This study focused on the crisis communication strategies employed by Dana Air in responding to the air crash crisis that occurred on June 3rd, 2012. This crisis case was specifically chosen because of certain peculiarities, such as an unpleasant event that is not too common in Nigeria, the significant disruption of the organisation, its activities and environment, high chances of reputation loss, extensive media coverage, and one with interests from various stakeholders. Therefore, attention and priority are given to communication approaches from the organisation to the public to manage the crisis. Hence, the study will not deal with the entire crisis management of the incident but will focus on the communication strategies and tactics implemented in responding to the plane crash. These communication strategies are found in press releases, media statements, video press conferences from Dana Air, and newspaper (Punch and Guardian June 2012) reportage of the incident.

For the second aspect of the study, which focused on stakeholders' perceptions of the reputation of Dana Air, the opinions of media experts, regulatory authorities, and current passengers were sought. The study will not gather the opinions of several other

stakeholder groups, such as the families and friends of the victims, as it is assumed that the passengers, media experts, and regulatory agencies are more likely to have constant interaction with the Dana Air brand. Thus, passengers responded to the survey aspect of the study. Finally, only willing crisis management team members participated in the key informant interview.

### **1.7 Operational Definition of Terms**

**Crisis:** In this study, crisis refers to the disruption of Dana Air activities with potentially positive and negative outcomes following the plane crash on 3rd June, 2012, affecting critical aspects of its existence.

**Crisis communication:** Refers to disseminating crisis information from Dana Air to its stakeholders during crises. Crisis communication was measured by the messages through press releases and media statements from Dana Air in response to the crisis.

**Crisis communication strategies:** Refers to the deliberate, strategic communication actions and tactics Dana Air employed during the crisis to influence stakeholders' perception of the crises and its reputation. These strategies were subjective and were extracted from the communication materials from Dana Air during the crisis.

**Stakeholders:** stakeholders are generally individuals or groups who can be affected and can affect the operations of organisations. In this study, stakeholders are categorised as Primary and Secondary, including the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB), aviation newspaper editors, and passengers of the airline.

**Reputation:** These are expectations (perceptions) that Dana Air stakeholders hold or have that can affect how they relate with Dana Air. In this study, Dana Air's reputation was measured along with two factors: financial (aspects directly related to monetary benefits) and social perceptions (aspects not related to monetary benefits). Financial reputation was represented by indices such as payment of dividends, investment values (long-term and short-term), prompt payment of salaries, and accountability from Dana Air, while social reputation indicators included working environment, brand image (quality of products and services, innovation), corporate social responsibility (community engagement), effective communication (internal and external) as well as the quality of Dana Air's management abilities. However, only non-financial



reputations were examined in this study as it was assumed that the selected stakeholders may not have current knowledge of the financial reputational measures of Dana Air.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.0 Chapter Overview**

This chapter reviewed relevant literature on significant issues relating to the study. These issues are arranged in chronological order, first with a discussion on the evolution and definitions of crisis, then progressing to examine discussions around crisis communication. It further reviewed discussions on organisational reputation and stakeholders in a crisis. The review then progressed to an empirical investigation of related studies within the discipline and presented an in-depth account of the discussion and findings of scholars from similar studies. This section ended with an in-depth analysis of theories situated within the discourse considered relevant to this study.

#### **2.1 The Concept of Crisis**

The study of crisis has evolved over the years, with various scholars providing various definitions of the idea. As a result of the several crisis definitions, it becomes difficult to provide a singular and widely acceptable definition of crisis, as is pertinent in other fields of study. Although the management of crises is the central focus of many articles and texts that focus on crisis management, scholars within the field have defined crisis in several ways. As a result, there is no commonly agreed-upon definition of crisis. Thus, the lack of a consensus crisis definition could result from researchers' divergent perspectives and focus within the discipline. Nonetheless, the multidisciplinary background of these crisis scholars further provided a solid base and perspective to understanding the complexities around crisis studies (Boin and T'Hart, 2007; Buchanan and Denyer, 2013, cited in Adebayo, 2017). While some scholars defined crisis based on the errors or historical turning points for organisations, others seemed to focus on the locus of control (adequate or inadequate) of the events that led to the

crises (Heath, 2010). Even more, some other scholars, defined crisis based on the necessity for the efforts of management to move beyond the often regular or routine measures, while some other scholars defined crisis based on the lack of proactive steps from organisations or inadequate preparation for the crisis (Heath, 2010 cited in Coombs and Holladay, 2010).

While it had been earlier ascertained that there is no singular commonly accepted crisis definition (Coombs, 1999; Falkheimer and Heide 2006; Coombs and Holladay 2010; Kim, 2015), the word crisis, originated from the Greek word, '*Krisis*.' The word *krisis* is translated as a "decisive moment," which refers to historical turning points where individual decisions could have far-reaching consequences in the future (Sellnow and Seeger, 2013). That is, crises are periods when vital decisions are taken that will have a favorable or unfavourable impact on an organisation, entity, or industry, and will either make or break the organisation's or entity's or industry's future. Indeed, this is largely true because, during a crisis, crisis managers seek the best available solutions to dealing with the situation so that the organisation's and stakeholders' reputational damage is minimised. On the one hand, the word *krisis* implies that historical turning points may occur. When crises are not properly managed, they can lead to the demise of organizations as a whole. On the other hand, when crises are handled properly, such situations may present greater opportunities for the organisations' growth and development. In either case, these eventualities represent watershed moments in the history and life of organisations, for better or worse.

Some characteristics have been used to describe and understand the word crisis within crisis communication research. For example, Hermann (1963), cited in Nwogwugwu (2018), identified three characteristics: surprise, threat, and short response time. In other words, a troubling event cannot become a crisis without first happening as a surprise (unexpected and, sometimes, anticipated), posing severe levels of threat to the organisation's high-priority values as well as presenting limited time to respond. Similarly, Ahmed (2006), cited in Cooley and Cooley (2011) identified other characteristics as unexpected and surprise element, an escalating flow of events, disruption of routine, a sense of losing control of the situation, scrutiny, inquiry, speculation, and the proliferation of negative publicity, and heightened media attention,. Additionally, Kim (2015) identified significant threats, unpredictability, and urgency as characteristics of crises.

Similarities between these characteristics reveal that crises are unexpected and unpredictable events that are surprising and are capable of creating a high level of uncertainties, posing threats to reputation, disrupting routines with a short time to respond, and creating heightened media involvement (Nwogwugwu, 2018). The next section discusses the various definitions of crisis definitions, emphasizing the earlier identified characteristics, with further discussions flowing into discussions around crisis communication.

### **2.1.1 Organisational Crisis**

Seemingly, from Section 2.1, there is no globally accepted definition of crisis because crisis scholars interpreted crises from various multidisciplinary backgrounds. From an organisational perspective, a crisis is an event that can threaten certain organisational expectations. This idea was initially captured by Herman (1963), who was one of the earliest organisational crisis researchers. According to Herman (1963), crises are unexpected occurrences that threaten high-priority organisational goals, which come with time constraints in the decision-making process. Indeed, numerous organisational crisis experts formed their crisis definitions around Herman's idea that crises are unpredictable events that pose dangers to vital aspects of organisations with limited response time.

As Seeger, Sellnow and Ulmer (1998) opined, an organisational crisis is "a specific, unexpected and non-routine event or series of events that create high levels of uncertainty and threaten or are perceived to threaten an organisation's high-priority goals" (p. 233). The author's definition aptly describes and integrates the characteristics of crises earlier defined by Herman. On the other hand, Seeger et al. (1998) believe that crises are unique. They are occurrences or events that are easily distinguishable and recognised. Crises are also surprising and unpredictable events that, when they occur, can threaten essential aspects of organisations. Essential aspects of organisations that could be threatened during a crisis could include sales, reputation, image, and stakeholders.

Similarly, Coombs (1999), a renowned crisis communication scholar, defines a crisis from an organisational context as an event that is unexpected, which can cause significant threats and have adverse effects on an organisation/industry and its stakeholders if mishandled. Also, Barton (2001) added that crises are unexpected,

negative, and overwhelming incidents. In addition, Perrow (2004), cited in Saka (2014), considers a crisis as a critical circumstance that can have serious negative implications for an organisation. Coombs, further expounds on his earlier definition, when in 2010, he defined crisis as "the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organisation's performance and generate negative outcomes" (Coombs 2010:19).

However, Mitroff and Anagnos (2001:34-35), explore a broader perspective about crisis by defining crisis as:

an event that affects or has the potential to affect the whole of an organisation. Thus, if something affects only a small, isolated part of an organisation, it may not be a major crisis. In order for a major crisis to occur, it must exact a major toll on human lives, property, financial earnings, the reputation, and the general health and well-being of an organisation.

This means that, for an incident to be regarded as a crisis, it must affect the entire aspects of organisations. Also, these crises explanations show that, more often than not, crises impact negatively on organisations.

It is pertinent to reiterate that many of the earlier crisis definitions tended to focus on the negative perspectives (Coombs and Schmidt, 2000; Barton, 2001; Perrow 2004 cited in Saka 2014; Coombs 2010; Fearn-Banks, 2011). This observation could, in some way, be valid as it could be argued that many crisis definitions believe that crises are negative events that occur to organisations with negative impressions on the image and reputation of such organisations. However, crisis literature has also shown a different perspective to crises. Scholars in this perspective see a crisis as an opportunity for organisations to become stronger and better developed than before the crisis. For instance, Alexander (2010:3) defined crisis as "dangerous moments or turning points in an organisation's life cycle; nevertheless, crisis provide opportunities with the potential to leave the organisation stronger in some ways than it was before the crisis." This could also mean that as in so far as crises could lead to negative outcomes for organisations, they could also become positive turning points by leaving such organisations better and more durable in many ways than they were before the crisis.

Likewise, Friedman (2002), cited in Coombs (2010), also believed that crises could sometimes lead to positive changes. He noted that crisis was “not necessarily a bad thing. It may be a radical change for good as well as bad” (p. 18). Here, it could be inferred that, as much as crises could lead to negative results, there are also opportunities inherent in them. Furthermore, Augustine (2000), cited in Pratt (2012) observed that “almost every crisis contains within itself, the seeds of success, as well as the roots of failure” (p. 4). All these definitions show that, more often than not, crises could be catalysts for organisational development.

Again, it could be observed from both the positive and negative crisis perspectives that these definitions do not directly identify with the perspectives of/from stakeholders. These early crisis definitions were organisation-centered, focusing on damages to image and reputation. It implies that stakeholders, who are significant groups in organisations, are not affected by crises. Perhaps, this was why Coombs (2009) stated that earlier crisis definitions focused more on threats and damages to the reputation of organisations. He further observed that only a percentage of the entire crisis story was likely to reach the public, as the public would only get to read or hear or receive a little fraction of the crisis information. Coombs (2009) further opined that to have a strategic evaluation of the impact of the crisis, attention should be focused on stakeholder reactions, since organisational crises can also harm stakeholders, thereby threatening the two-way interactions that exist between them. Therefore, Coombs (2009), cited in Heath (2010:100) defined crisis as:

The perception of an event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can impact the organisation's performance. Crises are largely perceptual. If stakeholders believe there is a crisis, the organisation is in a crisis, unless it can successfully persuade stakeholders it is not. A crisis violates expectations; an organisation has done something stakeholders feel is inappropriate

The stakeholder perspective to crises reveals that crises are mainly people's perceptions. Also, stakeholders will determine when an organisation is in crisis. Hence, this crisis definition by Coombs (2009) is in line with Benoit's (1997) belief that, regardless of whether a crisis occurred or not, as long as stakeholders believed it, then the crisis occurred. Little wonder Coombs (2007) had earlier stated that the main concern in a crisis was the public's safety – before reputation and financial interests are

considered. Thus, this study defines a crisis as an unusual but often expected event with potentially adverse results that could affect the way stakeholders perceive the image and reputation of organisations.

### **2.1.2 Classifications/Types of Crisis**

The crisis management literature is replete with various classifications of crisis. As earlier stated, this could be due to the perspectives and disciplines in which crisis scholars have viewed the discussion. Thus, crisis scholars have developed various classifications of crises to facilitate the discussions on its management. Coombs (1995), for example, used the Attribution Theory to create a two-by-two crisis type matrix. These crisis types were based on both intentionality and locus of control of the organisation in crisis. That is, crises were classified based on the intent of the organisation and the degree of control. Thus, crises were classified as (a) *accidents*, which could be unintentional and internal, (b) *transgressions*, which could be intentional and internal; (c) *Faux pas*, which could be unintentional and external, and (d) *terrorism* which could be intentional and external.

Also, Coombs and Holladay (2002) further expanded on the typology developed by Coombs (1999). On the other hand, Coombs and Holladay (2002) constructed these typologies based on attributions of crisis responsibilities or the degree to which an organisation was thought to be accountable for the crisis (Mejri and De Wolf, 2013). Thus, Coombs and Holladay (2002) developed three types of crisis: (a) *Victimised*, which are crises that result from natural disasters, rumour and workplace violence; (b) *Accidental*, which are crises that could result from challenges and technical-error accidents; and (c) *Preventable*, which are crises that result from human-error accidents and organisational misconducts. Similarly, while classifying crises by types, Alexander (2010) noted that the basic way to distinguish between crises types was to divide them into intentionality. Therefore, he divided crises into intentionally caused and unintentionally caused. Terrorism, workplace violence, sabotage, poor risk management, poor employee relationships, hostile takeovers, and unethical leadership are examples of intentionally caused crises, while natural disasters, disease outbreaks, unforeseeable technical interactions, product failure, and economic downturns are examples of unintentional crises.

Furthermore, Lerbinger (1997) cited in Olawale (2014), also classified crises into seven (7) categories. These include, (a) *Natural disasters*, such as earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions, storms, landslides, tornadoes and hurricanes, and tsunamis. Often, nobody is held responsible for natural disaster type of crisis. For instance, the May 2008 earthquake in Sichuan, China, which killed over 80,000 people and left over a million homeless, is an example of a crisis from a natural disaster. Also, the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004 killed almost 230,000 people and displaced 1.7 million; and Hurricane Katrina in 2005 which caused widespread destruction to the city of New Orleans and its environs. No organisation could be blamed for natural disasters. (b) *Technological crisis* is caused by the human application of technology. According to Labringer (2012), technological crises are caused by the human utilisation of science and technology. For technological crises, blames are usually assigned to humans or organisations because technology is subject to human manipulation. (c) *Confrontation Crisis* occurs when discontented individuals and groups fight businesses, government, and various interest groups to win the acceptance of their demands and expectations.

Other types of crisis as outlined by Lerbinger (1997) cited in Olawale (2014) include (d) *Crises of malevolence*, which occur when opponents or miscreants (individuals) employ criminal means or other extreme tactics to demonstrate enmity or displeasure toward, or benefit from, an organisation, country, or other entity. Examples of malevolence crises in Nigeria include the Niger Delta militant unrest, terrorism or bandits, and the menace of herders who kidnap and sometimes kill their victims. (e) *workplace violence* occurs when an employee or former employee commits violence against other employees on organisational grounds (f) *rumours*, which are crises that occur when false information or its products create crises that negatively affect the image and reputation of the organisation. For example, the Procter and Gamble logo crisis and product and organisational rumour crisis; and (g) *organisational misdeeds* occur when management takes actions that deliberately affect stakeholders or places them at risk of harm without adequate precautions.

Other scholars also classified crises according to the severity of the incident. However, Zaremba (2010) cited in Pratt (2012) provides a summary of categories of crises culled from the works of several writers. Natural disasters, management/employee malfeasance, product tampering, megadamage, rumour, technical breakdown/accident,



technical breakdown/not totally accidental, challenge, human mistake, and workplace violence are all examples of these categories.

### **2.1.3 Crisis Life Cycle**

Researchers in crisis communication agree that every crisis has a specific life cycle with various stages that necessitate different strategies (Fearn-Banks 2002; Coombs, 2007; 2010; Heath, 2010; Kim, 2015). These crisis scholars posit that classifying crises into distinct stages would assist organisational managers in managing the crisis more effectively. They further agree that these distinct stages require different management approaches. Therefore, crises periods have been divided into three stages - the pre-crisis, the crisis and post-crisis stages. Dorward and Kling (2008) posit that these three-stage model is a great avenue to see how organisations can work through a crisis. However, new trends in crisis management explain four stages of crisis life cycle. These include the trigger, manifestation, escalation and de-escalation stages. The study will briefly discuss these four stages of crisis followed with a summary of the three (3) stages of a typical crisis cycle. The crisis stages are further discussed:

#### **2.1.3.1 Four Stages of Crisis Cycle**

##### **(a) The Trigger Stage**

The trigger stage involves the anticipation of acts or events that will set off or escalate a crisis. In other words, the trigger stage discusses the possible signals, which sometimes, are not taken into account or ignored (Plesanu and Badulescu, 2018). Before crises happen, there must be some form of subtle trigger. However, these signs – visible or implied – may be overlooked.

##### **(b) The Manifestation Stage**

Once a crisis has been triggered and is not fully prevented, it leads to the second phase, the manifestation stage. The manifestation stage involves the visible expression of crisis. This is when the crisis manifests, either through violence or accidents and calls for a quick response. During this stage, there are evidences of fear, deaths, damage to property and stakeholders lose confidence in the abilities of such organisations to manage the crisis.

### **(c) The Escalation Stage**

The escalation stage refers to the period when the crisis escalates into full blown crisis which is difficult to manage. In other words, the escalation discusses the increase in the crisis tempo. This may result from improper handling of the manifestation stage. During this stage, the acts that led to the crisis can no longer be controlled.

### **(d) The De-escalation Stage**

The fourth stage – the de-escalation stage – refers to period when the crisis has lessened and organisations are learning from such occurrences. During this stage, organisations dissect the causes of the crisis, learn from it, and seek ways to improve and ensure that similar events do not re-occur. Organisations conduct damage control at this stage and reflect on lessons learned.

## **2.1.3.2 Three Stages of Crisis Management Life Cycle**

### **(a) The Pre-Crisis Stage/Phase**

The first crisis stage, the pre-crisis, refers to the period before a crisis. Essentially, this stage involves preparation and planning against possible damage (Coombs, 2007; 2010; Mejri and De Wolf, 2013; Doward and Kling, 2018) In other words, this stage involves studying the possible crises risks as well as preparing and preventing likely damages to the reputation of organisations. As Wan and Pfau (2004) cited in Coombs (2010) opined, messages given before crises provide the stakeholders with some level of information about a possible crisis which could assist them (stakeholders) to build up resistance to an undesirable reaction and media coverage of the crisis. In other words, Coombs (2010:26) noted that “early identification permits time for analysis and strategizing.” This means that organisations that are proactive enough to identify and prepare ahead for a crisis will have ample time to strategise on ways of responding to such crises.

Besides planning and preparing for possible crises, the pre-crisis stage is also where crisis managers have been advised to be sensitive to warning signals. Early detection of crisis signals occurs when organisations search the environment to determine threats that could contribute to the rise of such crises. A proper analysis of these early signals could be used to determine if the perceived threats would be real or not. A part of

analysing early signals still shows that organisations must plan and prepare for crises. that is why crisis communication scholars have advocated for adequate planning and prevention during the pre-crisis stage (Burnett, 1998; Jaques, 2007; Coombs, 2010 cited in Villines, 2011). To these scholars, efforts at the pre-crisis stage should be channelled towards preventing a crisis from occurring.

However, it is important to reiterate that crisis cannot be totally prevented. Rather, early preparation during the pre-crisis stage could assist to lessen the supposed damage. Thus, whenever a crisis eventually occurs, Coombs (2014), cited in Doward and Kling (2018), believes that the affected organisations must ensure that they are adequately prepared for it. To Mejri and De Wolf (2013), some activities that could be done to prevent or reduce crisis include: seeking to reduce known risks, such as implementing risk audits, safety measures and standards. Other activities include developing a yearly crisis management strategy, selecting and training a crisis management team, performing periodic exercises to test the crisis management plan and team, and pre-drafting part of the crisis communications.

An aspect of planning for a crisis includes efforts at establishing an expert team, saddled with the responsibility of planning and strategising on how to protect against reputational damages if crises occur. A crisis team is a team or group with appropriate resources and expertise in handling crisis. According to Coombs (2010), crisis teams are decision-making units that make a series of judgments regarding how the organisation should respond to a crisis. These individuals have separate meetings to discuss what they will do if a crisis should occur. The members should also be trained and skilled in coping strategies in dealing with the crisis. In addition, spokespersons for crisis teams must be experienced individuals who can talk to the media during crises. Coombs (2010) further added that crisis messages should typically comprise statements from top management, news releases, and dark web sites, which are crisis-specific communication channels.

#### **(b) The Crisis Stage/Phase**

The second stage of crisis, which is the crisis stage, has been regarded by Coombs (2010) as the aspect of crisis communication research that has received the greatest attention. The crisis stage is where the crisis occurs and concerns how organisations respond and manage it. In other words, the crisis stage requires quick response and

executions of the plans made during the pre-crisis stage. An immediate response is necessary to curtail and avert the dangers associated with reputational damage. Jaques (2007) cited in Villines (2011) opined that a crisis management response is selected and implemented during the crisis stage, damage is reduced, and stakeholders and the media are informed and managed. The stakeholders are adequately informed about the crisis to avoid any negative publicity and reputational damage. The stakeholders are important, because, as earlier mentioned, they decide if and when there is a crisis.

Organisational managers must ensure that adequate and appropriate measures are taken as a wrong action could damage the organisation's reputation. The main focus of the crisis stage is to handle the crisis and make sense of it (Frandsen and Johansen, 2011). Crisis managers must adequately process any information gathered during this stage and strive to contain the crisis. During this stage also, internal stakeholders must be carried along as the information they receive will determine if they will support and act as ambassadors to the organisation or not (Heide and Simonsson, 2014 cited in Doward and Kling, 2018).

### **(c) The Post-Crisis Management Stage/Phase**

The third and final crisis stage, the post-crisis stage, is when the crisis is over. This stage focuses on efforts at learning from the crisis (Coombs, 2010; Frandsen and Johansen, 2011). Also, dissecting the crisis management efforts, communicating necessary modifications to individuals, and sending follow-up crisis messages are all part of the post-crisis phase (Coombs 2010). Frandsen and Johansen (2011) noted that when the crisis is over, the organisation should conduct a damage control assessment which is necessary to investigate the impact of the crises. Also, Coombs (2010) cited in Villines (2011) reiterated that the post-crisis phase could be likened to a reflective phase that includes a continuous crisis communication to the stakeholders, reputation repair, and evaluation and learning. This means that the post-crisis stage is an evaluative stage where organisations are required to conduct performance assessments of the crisis strategies that worked out and those that were inappropriate. Coombs (2014) cited in Doward and Kling (2018) added that crisis managers should evaluate how the performance was during the crisis and if the appropriate guidelines guidelines that had been set out during the pre-crisis stage were followed. Also, organisations

must map out the lessons learnt from the crisis and seek better ways to improve similar crises in the future.

Furthermore, Villines, (2011) opined that during the post-crisis stage, organisations must manage operational recovery, share price protection, financial cost and investigate any litigation, injury, or death. Similarly, Grappi (2015) stated that organisations must understand and employ the proper post-crisis communication strategies to repair reputational damage, lessen negative emotional reactions from customers, and prevent harmful behavioral intents. Also, internal and external stakeholders, including the media, must be adequately informed on how the crisis was handled. Doward and Kling (2018) reiterated the role of internal stakeholders during this stage by stating that managers must measure how internal communication worked during the crisis and determine if enough information was passed among the internal stakeholders. The authors further added that while the way organisations handled the aftermath of crises is important, the way internal stakeholders were handled after the crisis is more important.

Each of the crisis stages discussed requires adequate communication as communication is central to all the crisis stages. The next section discusses crisis communication in detail and how to communicate during each stage.

## **2.2 Crisis Communication**

The seemingly unpredictable nature of a crisis places adequate demand on the need to respond - a need for information to be given. Crisis scholars identified communication as a key component when responding to a crisis (Barton 2001, Fearn-Banks 2002, Coombs, 2009). The focus of communication during a crisis is essential to reduce the uncertainties, blame, and perceptions from the publics. Ray (1999), as cited by Stephens, Malone, and Bailey (2005), believes that one essential goal of crisis communication is to impact stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation and maintain or restore a positive reputation among stakeholders. In other words, communicating during a crisis can assist in the reduction of the perceived reputational damage(s), if organisations can communicate with stakeholders during a crisis. As Greyser (2009) and Cornelissen (2014) cited in Adebayo (2017:54) posited, an established organisational communication process makes it easy for the organisation to transition its strategy from "peacetime" to "crisis time" and vice versa. "It provides a structure

for the effective coordination of both the internal and external communication process of the organisation; build and maintain a healthy corporate identity, image, and reputation between the stakeholders and the organisation itself. This supports earlier assertions that communication is, indeed, the lifeblood of organisations.

Crisis communication in simple terms is the response of an organisations to a crisis. Coombs (2010:20) in his assertions on crisis communication revealed that it is "the collection, processing and dissemination of information required to addressing a crisis situation." That is, crisis communication consists of the entire communication pattern available to organisations in reaching out to stakeholders before, during, and after crisis events. Similarly, Fearn-Banks (2016) cited in Adebayo (2017) added that crisis communication entailed preparing for a possible crisis, and in the event of a crisis, the crisis management team is expected to gather information on the crisis, keep the public informed, and keep them up to date on the steps being taken to prevent a recurrence. This crisis communication definition shows that the stakeholders must be informed about how the organisation will prevent future crises.

According to Coombs (2009), the main focus of crisis communication is on how organisations use communication to manage information and meaning during crises. Crisis communication provides information that aids stakeholders in making sense of the crisis. In other words, the emphasis is placed on what organisations in crisis can do and say when responding to crises and how communication could influence the public's perception towards the crisis and the organisation involved in the crisis (Coombs and Holladay, 2014). Therefore, it becomes important to communicate early enough to the public. As Reynolds and Seeger (2005) cited in Kim (2015) noted, communicating timely information to the public is an essential function of crisis communication. Communication with various stakeholder groups, such as victims, potential victims, and close family members, on a timely basis may aid in the mitigation or containment of harm. The implication of crisis communication with these groups is to build a favourable reputation, as organisations use communication to provide explanations to stakeholders about the crisis aimed at minimising the perceived severity of reputation loss and seek solutions.

Crisis communication involves publicising information about a crisis, especially to stakeholders. Communicating with stakeholders before, during, and after a crisis may

engender sympathy to and support for all through the crisis stage. Fearn-Banks (2002:480), observed that the type of communication during a crisis is usually, "verbal, visual and/or written interaction between the organisation and its stakeholders (often through the media) before, during and after a negative occurrence." Also, Coombs (2010) adds that communication involves actual words (verbal) and actions (non-verbal) that the organisation uses to reduce harm to its reputation. Thus, communication should include verbal and visual messages to the stakeholders through the media. The next section discusses the application of communication during each crisis stages.

### **2.2.1 Communication during Crisis Management Phases**

It had earlier been established that crises, when not properly managed, could negatively harm organisations' reputation, stakeholders, and other high-priority goals of the organisation. Also, each stage of crisis presents unique challenges that require the need for information to be given. Coombs (2010) specifically pointed out that each crisis presents the demand for collecting and interpreting several information and knowledge sharing. Therefore, it has been recommended that certain strategies must be mapped out for each crisis stage in dealing with them. When responding to crises, one point of agreement among crisis communication scholars in the literature is that organisations must promptly deliver accurate information to all stakeholders (Sellnow and Ulmer, 1995, cited in Arpan and Ewoldsen 2005; Bell, 2010; Coombs 2010). We shall, therefore, take a look at crisis communication during each crisis stage.

Pre-crisis information involves how an organisation communicates with its stakeholders before a crisis and how the organisation creates positive images and reputation in the minds of the stakeholders. Pre-crisis information is done with the belief that stakeholders would empathise with the organisation during a crisis. Since crises are usually unexpected, organisations must operate with the assumption that crisis can occur anytime. Coombs (2010) believes that crisis communication at the pre-crisis stage concentrates on locating and reducing risk. In other words, organisations must anticipate crisis and, therefore, be proactive enough to ensure that the perceived risk is reduced. By communicating to stakeholders before a crisis, organisations attempt to reduce any form of risk, especially for crises where organisations are attributed as the cause. Fishman (2009) cited in Adebayo (2017) further noted that communication at the pre-crisis stage is a proactive process when an organisation is

undergoing its quiet period and uses these quiet periods to get to know its environment better. As a result, a successful pre-crisis communication plan aids organisations in recognizing a problem before it becomes a crisis. Adebayo (2017), on the other hand, argues that having an effective crisis communication strategy in place should not be viewed as a guarantee that the organisation will not face a crisis.

According to Coombs (2010), acquiring information on crisis risks, making management decisions on managing prospective crises, and educating team members who will be involved in crisis management are all part of communication during the pre-crisis period. Organisations must prepare for impending crises by gathering as much information about the risks of crises and planning to make decisions that would manage such risks. Also, there must be adequate training for personnel who would be involved managing the crisis. Some personnel that should be trained in crisis management include the crisis team members, crisis spokespersons, and others who will assist with the response. Spokespersons are crucial crisis team members during the pre-crisis stage. This is because their choice of words and communication strategies would determine how successful or otherwise their messages are on the stakeholders. Coombs (2011) further asserted that spokespersons are trained to avoid saying "*no comment*." This is because when stakeholders hear *no comment* it shows that the organisation has something it is hiding as well as a feeling of guilt.

Communication during the crisis stage involves all the actions and attempts by the organisation to respond to the crisis. Some scholars have identified the crisis stage as the most critical of the crisis stages (Coombs, 2010; Mejri and De Wolf, 2013). Furthermore, Richardson cited in Mejri and De Wolf (2013) opined that organisational managers should reduce the crisis and offer support to the affected victims of the crisis during the crisis stage. Coombs (2007) further added that crisis managers should be quick, accurate and consistent in their communication. That is, crisis managers must respond immediately - especially within the first hour of the occurrence of the crisis – and must be accurate in their response - since people would want accurate information about the crisis event and how it might affect them. Finally, crisis managers must be consistent by ensuring that spokespersons are well informed by having strategic and consistent message points.



Crisis communication scholars agree that providing information to stakeholders during a crisis is important in salvaging the organisation's reputation. Coombs (2007) cited in Mejri and De Wolf (2013) had identified the protection of stakeholders from harm as the priority for crisis managers. "Companies need then to be more open with sincere information to their stakeholders in order to help them cope with the psychological uncertainty from the crisis" (p. 74). This is done with the hope that once stakeholders are carried along, it would reduce the likely reputational damage.

Communicating during the post-crisis stage involves learning from the crisis. According to Coombs (2007) cited in Mejri and De Wolf (2013), the post-crisis phase begins immediately after the crisis phase when the organisation has returned to business. At this stage, such organisations seek ways of better preparing for the next crisis and fulfill the promises and commitments made to the stakeholders during the crisis phase, including providing follow-up information. Thus, the primary focus of the post-crisis communication is to ensure that the organisation follows up with its stakeholders and to establish further positive relationships.

Furthermore, during the post-crisis communication stage, Coombs (2007) cited in Grundy and Moxon (2013) articulated three suggested best practices to organisational managers. First, he suggested that organisations must deliver on all the promises made to stakeholders including providing information as soon as it is known. Secondly, he believed that organisations should keep their stakeholders informed about recovery activities, including corrective actions and investigations. Finally, organisations should review their crisis management strategies for lessons learnt and integrate those lessons into their crisis management system.

The next section discusses some strategies available to crisis managers when responding to crises.

### **2.3 Crisis Communication and Response Strategies**

Crisis communication research is replete with studies that examined various crises and the responses of organisations to the crises. However, Meer and Verhoeven (2014) observed that crisis communication research has been expanded in scope, showing studies that have examined the relationship between crises, communication strategies, and stakeholders' perceptions. The apparent shift to stakeholders was necessary because stakeholders are critical components to the success of crisis communication efforts. Also, as Coombs (2011) noted, stakeholders can see crisis reactions, which are critical to the success of crisis management operations. While it had earlier been established that organisations in crises face severe reputational threats, these crises can also threaten the existing relationships between organisations and their stakeholders. Coombs (2007) reiterated that the more an organisation was perceived to be responsible for acts that led to a crisis, the greater the reputational damage will be. Thus, reputational damage could be minimised when appropriate strategies are used at the right time.

In essence, organisations must respond to crises by providing necessary crisis information to the public to reduce the perceived reputational damage. To this end, crisis communication scholars agree that using communication strategies to respond to crises strategically can either heighten or reduce the perceived threats to organisational reputation. To avoid reputational damage, organisations need to communicate with stakeholders by providing necessary information about the crisis. The provision of crisis information is necessary as stakeholders need to know the organisations' strategic plans in protecting them from the occurrence of similar crises in the future (Sellnow, cited in Coombs, 2007). Thus, the availability and choice of message strategies will, to some extent, determine the extent of organisational reputational damage and how stakeholders will perceive the crisis.

Therefore, crisis communication strategies are the "symbolic resources which would shape the attributions of responsibility for the crisis, change public perceptions about the organisation in crisis and reduce the negative impact caused by the crisis" (Coombs, 2007a, as cited in Tam and Huang, 2016:1). In other words, crisis response strategies encompass all communicative activities and strategies that organisations employ in reaction to a crisis, which have the potential to shape crisis attributions, alter public perceptions of the organisation, and aid in mitigating the crisis's negative

effects. As Coombs (2007) further opined, a crisis response strategy is a form of crisis communication that focuses on how organisations respond to the public and how messages are delivered to restore the organisation's reputation. In addition, Coombs, Frandsen, Holladay and Johansen (2010:337), believe that crisis responses can "either improve or make the crisis situation worse for a corporation and its various stakeholders," as the response strategy can be the difference between success and failure.

Crisis communication scholars have conceptualised the roles of crisis response strategies into two central themes. The major themes, according to Coombs (2009), are (1) to prevent or lessen the damage caused by the crisis to the organisation, and (2) crisis responses are utilised to change specific aspects of stakeholders' perceptions. Coombs (2009) further noted that these strategies were anticipated to form views of crisis traits that influenced how stakeholders saw the organisation in a crisis, change perceptions of the organisation in a crisis, and lessen the negative effect created by the crisis. As a result, crisis reactions can be thought of as persuasive communication since they can be used to shape, change, or reinforce a person's attitude or behaviour.

Crisis managers have also been advised on when and how to use crisis response strategies. For instance, Coombs (1999) cited in Stephens et al. (2005) observed that The target audience, the type of crisis, accessible evidence, the severity of the crisis' damage, the organisation's performance history, legal difficulties, and credibility should all be considered while choosing a strategy. In addition, Ray (1999) cited in Stephens et al. (2005) further added that crisis managers must also consider the culture of the organisation when choosing a strategy. The consideration of the organisational culture was necessary as it could affect how the organisation communicates with its stakeholders and could further have a strong impact on whether such organisations take responsibility, offer excuses, or place blames elsewhere.

Research into crisis response strategies has, over the years, undergone various remarkable changes. That is, various strategies have been used when responding to various crises. However, it is imperative to state that since crises are unique and differ from one organisation to another, not all strategies will work in all crises. To this end, crisis communication scholars have identified and tested various strategies that could be employed when communicating with stakeholders and responding to a crisis. These

strategies have formed theoretical approaches for responding to an organisational crisis. Romenti and Valenti (2010) cited in Radtke (2011:18) after analysing the various response strategies summarised and categorised these strategies into two traditions: "rhetorical or text-oriented traditions and strategic or context-oriented tradition."

On the one hand, strategies that belong to the rhetorical or text-oriented tradition address what and how organisations should communicate when faced with crises (Romenti and Valenti, 2010 as cited in Radtke, 2011). Theories that belong to the rhetorical or text-oriented category are those whose recommendations are in line with the form and content of messages. One common theory that belongs to this category is the Image Restoration Theory (IRT) introduced by William Benoit in 1995 to explain and understand the various image/reputation repair and response strategies available to organisations facing crises (Benoit, 1997). Crisis response strategies available to organisations using the image repair strategies include denial, evasion of responsibility, reduction of offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification. In other words, organisations in crises can either deny any involvement in the crises or evade responsibility, or reduce the responsibility of the crisis act. Also, they can plan to solve the problems caused by the crisis or apologise for the crisis. Another theory that falls into this category is the Corporate Apologia, which comprises strategies available to organisations for their self-defense or to either maintain or repair their reputation and image. Strategies available to crisis managers using the Corporate Apologia include denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence.

On the other hand, the strategic or context-oriented tradition is more concerned with when and where the organisation must communicate. In other words, unlike the rhetorical and text-oriented tradition that deal with how and what to communicate, the strategic and context-oriented tradition deals with the characteristics of the crisis as a determining factor for the crisis strategy to be used. Strategies that fall under this category are the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) developed by Timothy Coombs, the Attribution theory, and the neo-institutionalism theory. These strategies offer crisis managers "an empirically tested set of guidelines on how to respond to specific crisis situations" (Radtke, 2011:19). Strategies in the SCCT, for instance, include, denial, diminish, rebuild, and bolstering strategies. The denial strategies attempt to remove any connection between the organisation and the crisis

while diminish strategies seek to reduce offensiveness for the crisis. The rebuild crisis strategies seek to improve the organisation's reputation by offering material and or symbolic forms of aid to victims while bolstering strategies seek to remind stakeholders of previous good deeds of the organisation. It is worthy to note that the findings of previous crisis communication studies (An and Cheng, 2010; Avery, Lariscy, Kim, and Hocke, 2010; Nwogwugwu, 2018), consistently revealed that crisis response strategies of the SCCT and IRT were the most dominant in crisis communication research.

## **2.4 Organisational Reputation**

One of the focal issues in crisis communication research is how organisational reputation could be threatened and damaged during crises. To show the increasing research on organisational reputation studies, Veh, Gobel and Vogel (2018) conducted a data query search on academic publications from 1969 – 2016 in the Scopus database. Their findings revealed a steady increase in studies on organisational reputation from zero publications in 1969 to over six hundred (600) publications in 2013 alone. The increase in scholarly publications on organisational reputation as a result demonstrates the concept's significance in management study. Furthermore, Holladay (2010), stated that the importance of reputation in creating investment interest, eliciting good coverage by financial analysts, attracting skilled personnel, and motivating employees justifies the focus on reputation.

Just like the definition of crisis, an organisational reputation also does not have a globally accepted definition. However, most of the literature on organisational (corporate) reputation agree that a reputation is a valuable, intangible organisational asset that could be damaged during a crisis (Lockwood 2005; Coombs and Holladay, 2006; Coombs 2007; 2011; Kleinnijenhuis, Schultz, Utz, and Oegema, 2015; Zavyalova, Pfarrer, Reger and Hubbard, 2016). For instance, Coombs (2007) defined an organisation's reputation as an overall assessment by stakeholders of how well the organisation is satisfying their expectations. That is, the reputation of an organisation is determined by its stakeholders. It is dependent on the perception of how well stakeholder expectations are met. As a result, stakeholders shape the reputations of organisations. Similarly, Fombrun, cited in Kyhn, (2008:7) defines an organisation's reputation as "a perceptual representation of a company's past actions and future

prospects that describe the firm's overall appeal to all of its key constituents when compared to other leading rivals." From Khyn's definition, an organisation's reputation is the total perception that stakeholders have about how the actions and inactions of organisations, past, present, and future, affect and or appeal to them (stakeholders). Thus, these perceptions can influence stakeholders' behaviour towards such organisations.

The reputation of an organisation influences the way stakeholders interact with such organisation. Coombs (2007) noted that individuals (stakeholders) develop views about the reputation of an organisation through personal interactions with the organisation, often formed by the influence of news reports and social media. Also, Coombs (2010), in another study, further expanded on how individuals can form reputations about organisations. He noted that these reputations are created by stakeholders through direct and mediated contact with an organisation. According to him, the direct contact could be through buying a product or using a service or equally visiting a store. Mediated contact, on the other hand, does not involve a direct contact with the organisation but, rather, through means such as messages from the organisation, including online messages from the organisation and others, word-of-mouth communication, and from news media coverage about an organisation. In short, all the various ways through which stakeholders get in contact with organisations help them (stakeholders) to create an impression or perception about such organisations. In essence, reputation discusses how an organisation creates value through its products and services to the stakeholders which could enable stakeholders to prefer an organisation's value over others. As Kelly (2014) opined, the supportive behavior of an organisation's stakeholders is commonly used to assess its reputation. As a result, a favorable and unfavorable reputation may exist.

Indeed, a reputation becomes favourable when stakeholders believe that the organisation is meeting their needs, upholding societal values, and are ethical and honest in their communications. Thus, there are perceived benefits of a favourable organisational reputation. Coombs and Holladay (2006) cited in Radtke (2011:123-4) listed some of several benefits of a favourable reputation to include "attracting customers, generating investment interest, attracting top employee talent, motivating workers, increasing job satisfaction, generating more positive media coverage, and garnering positive comments from financial analysts." These benefits portend that a

favourable reputation will encourage shareholders to invest in organisations, assist in the retention of customers, attract quality employees, create a great working environment, and gather positive organisational reviews. On the other hand, however, negative interactions with stakeholders can lead to loss of customers, loss of finance, and loss of trust in the organisation. As Coombs (2007) observed, when an organisation's reputation changes from favourable to unfavourable, it could lead stakeholders to change their interaction with such organisations and may eventually, cut off ties with and could further spread negative information about the organisations. Therefore, a shift from a favourable to an unfavourable reputation can affect the way stakeholders interact with such organisations.

Building a reputation can take time; however, such reputation could be destroyed within minutes. Therefore, as an intangible asset of an organisation, a reputation is threatened during a crisis. Villines (2011) observed that no matter how much an organisation prepares in advance for a crisis, the possibility of reputational damage still exists. Also, reputational threats can lead to negative perceptions from stakeholders about the crisis and the organisation. Thus, stakeholder relationships are considered crucial to the formation of the organisation's reputation before, during, and after a crisis (Meer, Verhoeven, Beetjes and Vliegenhart, 2017). However, prior organisation-stakeholder relationships before a crisis can reduce the perceived reputational threats or negative perceptions. This is one reason organisations seek to strengthen relationships with stakeholders as both parties have roles to be played and expectations to be met to grow in business. A prior favourable reputation can, however, provide a reservoir of goodwill that organisations can make use of to their advantage during a crisis while organisations with prior unfavourable reputations can likely have such reputation damaged during crises. In managing stakeholder perceptions of, and preserving or repairing reputation, David and Chiciudean (2013) advised that organisations seek to use crisis communication as the main instrument. Constant communication before, during, and after a crisis is necessary for stakeholders to support organisations and minimise unfavourable reputational damage.

The literature on organisational reputation is replete with different indices that could be used to measure the reputation of organisations. However, one of the most established and widely employed measure of corporate reputation, which has been adopted by many (crisis) scholars was proposed by two (2) media organisations -

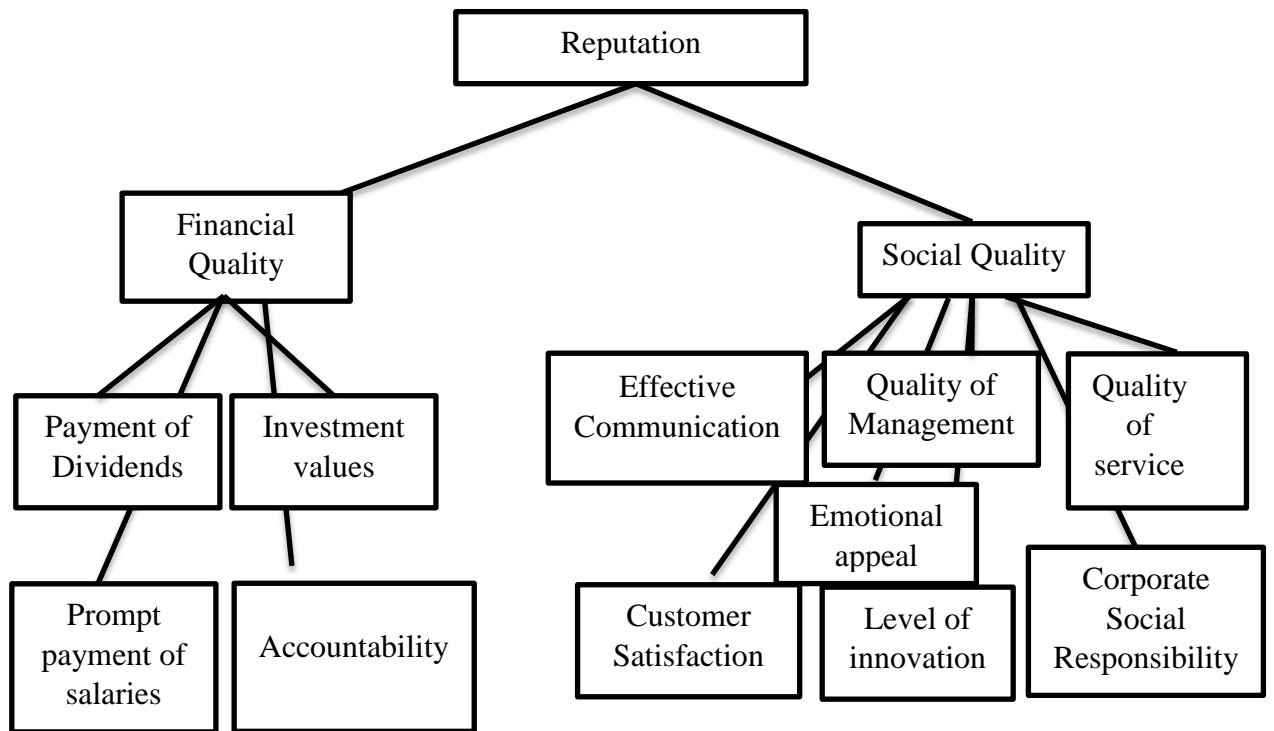
*Fortune*, which was an annual survey of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) as well as analysts on their assessments on Fortune companies, and *Financial Times*, which consisted responses from 4000 CEOs across 70 countries. For the *Fortune* media reputation quotient, respondents were required to rate an organisation's overall reputation along 8 major attributes, such as financial soundness, long-term investment value, use of corporate assets, innovativeness, quality of the organisation's management, quality of the organisation's products and services, the organisation's ability to attract, develop and retain talented employees and the acknowledgment of social responsibility (Chun, 2005). Similarly, the *Financial Times* World's Most Respected Companies rankings view reputation across eight (8) criteria, which include, strong and well-thought strategies, maximising customer satisfaction and loyalty, business leadership, quality of products and services, strong and consistent profit performance, robust and human corporate culture, successful change management as well as globalisation to business (Financial Times, 2000).

Another widely accepted measurement of organisational reputation was a model proposed by Fombrun, Naomi, Gardberg and Server (2010). The model, known as the Reputation Quotient Model (RQM) presents six (6) dimensions of corporate reputation based on 20 characteristics. These dimensions include corporate social responsibility, financial performance, vision and leadership, workplace environment, products, and services as well as emotional appeal.

Further enquiry from these criteria for measuring corporate reputation shows that they could be subdivided into two major typologies. Thus, for the purpose of this study, these two major typologies are financial and social perceptions. In other words, organisational reputation could be classified as either financial (aspects that directly relate to monetary or economic benefits) and non-financial (represented by social – aspects that are not related directly to the economy or monetary quality). Financial classifications of reputation are represented by indices such as payment of dividend, investment value (long-term and short-term), consistent profit/loss performance, and payment of salaries. Social quality reputational indicators include quality of services, level of innovation, customer satisfaction, corporate social responsibility, effective communication, emotional appeal as well as the quality of management abilities.



For this study, respondents were required to respond to only the social quality aspects of Dana Air's reputation. This was deliberate as it was assumed that respondents (passengers) may not have direct information on the financial aspects of Dana Air's operations. Thus, statements relating to the social quality indicators were sought. Figure 2.1 presents a graphical representation of the concept formation of Dana Air's reputation quotient adopted for this study.



**Figure 2.1: Concept Formation of Organisational Reputation**

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2019

## 2.5 Stakeholders

As Stephens, Malone, and Bailey (2005) observed, organisations operate in volatile contexts where they must frequently examine their stakeholder interactions and relationships. Thus, crisis communication research has evolved from studies that focused on organisational-centered perspectives to studies that focused on crisis responses. Furthermore, more crisis communication research moved to studies that focused on organisations' interests (Knoespel, 2011; Villines, 2011; Grundy and Moxon 2013; Maiorescu, 2016; Nwogwugwu, 2018). Those with interests in organisations are known as stakeholders. A stakeholder, as defined by Freeman (1984) cited in Xi and Li (2013) is any individual or a group of people who can affect or are affected by the achievement(s) of an organisation's. In other words, stakeholder's, to a great extent, can affect and can be affected by the (in)actions of organisations. Similarly, Lane (2016) describes stakeholders as individuals or groups who have power over an organisation's success or failure. Stakeholders are, therefore, an integral part of organisations and critical to the success or otherwise of organisations.

Stakeholders have been divided based on their roles within organisations. For instance, Sellnow cited in Hearkens (2013) and Coombs (2000) classified stakeholders as primary and secondary. Stakeholders classified as primary are individuals and groups who are directly affected by the success or failure of organisations. Coombs (2000) further described primary stakeholders as those who could harm or be harmed by a crisis but are necessary for such organisations' survival. According to Clarkson (1995) cited in Kyhn (2008), examples of primary stakeholders include employees, customers, investors, suppliers, and public stakeholder groups. Also, Sellnow (1993) cited in Hearkens (2013) added that communities where organisations are located are primary stakeholders. Also, Clarkson (1995) cited in Kyhn (2008) opined that there was a high level of independence between an organisation and its primary stakeholder groups organisations depend on these primary groups to survive in the market. Kyhn (2008) added that if these primary stakeholders withdrew their support, it could severely damage the organisation and deter its operations.

Secondary stakeholders, on the other hand, are individuals or groups who are influenced by the actions of the organisation. Clarkson (1995) cited in Kyhn (2008) stated that secondary stakeholders, while influenced by the organisation's actions, are not involved in transactions with it and are unnecessary for its survival. Examples of

secondary stakeholders include the media, competitors, and several special interest groups. However, for Nielson (2016), stakeholders are classified as both internal and external. Internal stakeholders, according to him, include those in management, marketing experts, designers, purchasing, production, assembly, and sales, while external stakeholders include users/customers, distributors, governments, suppliers, communities, laws, and regulations, among others.

Furthermore, other scholars (Dougherty, 1992; Ray, 1999, Stephens et al. 2005) classify stakeholders, based on their functions within organisations. For instance, stakeholders are classified as enabling publics, functional publics, normative publics and diffused publics. Enabling publics provide the authority and control the resources that allow the organisation to exist. Examples of enabling publics include shareholders, regulatory agencies and board of directors. Functional publics give ideas in form of input to the organisation and get an output in return. Functional publics provide labour and utilise the organisation's product or service. Examples include customers, unions, employees and suppliers. Dougherty (1992) cited in Stephens et al. (2005) adds that during a crisis, victims may also be regarded as functional publics. This is because they may have been customers before the crisis.

Also, normative publics are groups that share similar values or problems with the organisation. Examples include political and professional groups as well as trade unions. Also, diffused publics are groups of individuals that surface when the activities of the organisation result in external consequences. They include the media, environmentalists, community, residents and the public at large (Dougherty, 1992 cited in Stephens et al. 2005). All these categories of stakeholders can be affected by the actions, policies, and decisions of the organisation.

As a result of the important role of stakeholders in organisations, it is in the interest of organisations to constantly communicate with their various stakeholders. Stakeholders must be taken into consideration before, during and after crises. According to Helm and Tolsdorf (2013), cited in Kim (2015:35), after a crisis, "stakeholders may not only have negative perceptions of the organisation's reputation but also stop buying its products and no longer support the organisation." Also, Coombs and Holladay (2014:44), argue that crisis can "cause people to be less supportive of an organisation or sever ties with the organisation...and can also make publics to rally to support the

organisation and thereby enhance the organisation's crisis management efforts." This goes on to show the severity of a crisis on stakeholder attitude/behaviour towards an organisation.

As much as a crisis affects the reputation of organisations, it can also affect stakeholders. Coombs (2007) explained that crises can harm a wide range of stakeholders physically, emotionally and financially. Therefore, understanding stakeholder needs and behaviour is crucial as it can help the organisation to design effective crisis communication strategies after a crisis. Stakeholders need to be informed, as well as know what the organisation is doing to protect their interests. Crisis communication strategies are, therefore, an organisation's response to stakeholder's worries about a crisis. Organisations use crisis communication strategies to protect their reputation (Coombs and Holladay, 2002) and ensure that key stakeholder's perceptions of the organisation are not affected (Newsom and Haynes, 2011 cited in Coombs, Frandsen, Holladay and Johansen, 2010).

Stakeholder reactions during an organisational crisis are crucial in the crisis communication process. Coombs and Holladay (2014) observed that stakeholder responses to an organisational crisis can indicate whether or not they have accepted the crisis and the responses, especially those on (social) media, are important in shaping organisational reputations.

### **2.5.1 Analysis of Airline Stakeholders**

Airports provide air transportation services to humans and goods. Schaar and Sherry (2010) opined that airports were created to provide high-quality service to local businesses and inhabitants at a fair cost, while operating in a monopolistic (or semi-monopolistic) environment. Different categories of airline stakeholders have been acknowledged in literature. These categories include individual passengers, financial and non-financial organisations, air carriers, general aviation users, internal employees, investors, service providers, concessionaires, the media, the Government (Federal, state and local), non-governmental organisations, aviation regulatory agencies, the community where the airline organisation is located. Terrorist groups are also major stakeholders in the aviation industry.

These airline stakeholders listed above can be affected and can affect the activities of airline organisations. Hence, adequate interest should be given to each stakeholder group.

### **2.5.2 Air Disasters in Nigeria**

In the history of Nigerian air disasters, the Dana Air plane crash in 2012 was not the first. On May 4, 2002, for example, an EAS Airline BAC 1-11-500 crashed into a highly populated area in Kano State, killing all 148 people on board, including the crew. Two major plane disasters rocked the Nigerian airspace in 2005, causing major agitations in the airline industry in the country. The first occurred on October 22, 2005, when a Boeing 737 operated by Bellview Airline crashed shortly after takeoff from Lagos, killing all 117 people on board. The second crash occurred on 10th December 2005, involving a Sosoliso Airline DC-9, which crashed in Port-Harcourt, Rivers State, killing 103 persons, majority of whom were kids. The next year, on October 29, 2006, a Boeing 737, operated by the Aviation Development Company (ADC) crashed shortly after take-off from Abuja, killing all 104 people on board, including Muhammadu Maccido, the former Sultan of Sokoto. The next section discusses a brief history of Dana Air and circumstances that led to the plane crash.

### **2.6 Brief History of Dana Air**

Dana Airlines Limited, which currently operates as Dana Airline (henceforth known as Dana Air), is a fully private sector-owned carrier operating in Nigeria. The airline began flight operating on 10th November, 2008 and has since built a route network and provided convenience and choice to the flying public ([www.flydanaair.com](http://www.flydanaair.com)). Dana Air draws leisure and business travelers from both within and outside Nigeria, as their target market comprises those looking for safe, high-quality, and reasonably priced air travel.

Dana Air's official website shows its vision is to be recognised and respected as Nigeria's most reliable and customer-friendly airline. At the same time, the mission statement of Dana Air shows that they intend to “earn the loyalty of customers by consistently demonstrating their commitment to service and providing affordable regional air transport services that focus on innovation, quality, and service excellence.” The aims of the organisation are to:

1. Offer passengers competitive fares
2. Bring service to many under-served routes and communities
3. Bring the benefits of competition to Nigerian passengers
4. Help Nigerian regions grow as tourist destinations
5. Will fly to the highest operational and quality standards
6. Bring employment in the important aviation sector
7. Be a symbol for Nigeria to be proud

Dana Air currently operates only domestic flights within Nigeria from their Murtala Muhammed Airport Terminal 2 (MMA2) centre, with flight routes from Lagos to Abuja, Port Harcourt, Uyo, and Port Harcourt to Abuja, and Uyo to Abuja. In 2020, Dana Air commenced flight operations into Owerri and Enugu airports, respectively.

Sadly, less than four years into its flight operations, precisely on Sunday, 3 June 2012, one of its aircraft, a Boeing MD-83 domestic, commercial flight 9J-992 (DAN 0992), airlifted one hundred and forty-six (146) passengers from Abuja to Lagos and crashed in a populated Iju-Ishaga area of Lagos State. The airplane reportedly struck an uncompleted building, two trees, and three other buildings (Baron, 2017), which led to a post-impact fire. The resulting crash killed all one hundred and forty-six (146) passengers on board, including seven crew members, making it a total of one hundred and fifty-three (153) persons and another ten on the ground.

### **2.6.1 Timeline of the Crash**

The following summarizes the official timeline of the Dana Air plane crash, as contained in the 2017 Report from the Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB). The researcher observed that the direct quotations from the Report were obtained from a Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR), a flight recorder used to record the audio environment in the flight deck of an aircraft to investigate accidents and incidents.

2:58 pm – Flight was airborne from Abuja after reporting a fuel endurance of 3 hours 30 minutes

3: 13.44 pm – Captain and F.O. discussed a non-normal condition regarding the correlation between the engine throttle setting and an engine power indication. However, they did not voice out concerns that the condition would affect the continuation of the flight.

The flight crew continued to monitor the condition and became concerned as the flight transitioned through the initial descent cruise altitude at 3:22 pm.

3:31:12 pm – The crew confirmed no throttle response on the left engine, and subsequently, the Captain took control as P.F. at 3:31:27pm. The crew continued towards Lagos with no declaration of any distress message.

Between 3:37 pm and 3:41 pm – The crew engaged in pre-landing tasks, including the deployment of the slats and extension of the flaps and landing gear

3:41:46pm – the flight crew later deliberated and agreed to declare an emergency

3:42:35pm – The crew lowered the flaps of the aircraft and continued with the approach. 10 seconds later, the Captain reported the runway in sight and instructed the F.O. to retract the flaps and four seconds later to retract the landing gear

3:43:27pm – Captain informed F.O., "We just lost everything. We lost an engine. I lost both engines." During the next 25 seconds until the end of the CVR recording, the flight crew attempted to recover engine power without reference to any checklist.

### **2.6.2 Immediate Cause(s) of the Crash and Resulting Crisis**

The last statement by the crashed aircraft captain signalled the end of the recording as the plane crashed in a populated Iju Ishaga area of Lagos State. Thus, the aftermath of the plane crash triggered the crisis that befell Dana Air. The plane crash attracted extreme media attention and criticism from stakeholders and the public in general. Also, some print and online news outlets, including critical stakeholders, had circulated some (mis)information about the causes of the crash. However, while Dana Air could not ascertain the exact cause(s) of the crash at that time, the Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB), the body responsible for investigating plane crashes, was called upon to investigate and determine the actual cause(s) of the crash. Officials from Dana Air assisted investigators from the AIB, engine manufacturers Pratt and Whitney, and several other aviation experts were involved in investigations to unravel the cause(s) of the plane crash.



However, the 210-paged final investigative AIB Report findings on the plane crash reported some probable causes. The AIB Report, which was released on March 13, 2017, five years after the crash, identified the following possible reasons:

loss of engine power number 1 seventeen minutes into the flight, and thereafter on final approach, Engine number 2 lost power and failed to respond to throttle movement on demand for increased power to sustain the aircraft in its flight configuration (AIB Report, 2017: 2).

In other words, the plane crashed mid-air as a result of the loss of both engines. However, besides the loss of engines, the Report further listed other probable causes that led to the fatal incident. These include "the inappropriate omission of the use of the Checklist, and the crew's inability to appreciate the severity of the power-related problem, and their subsequent failure to land at the nearest suitable airfield, lack of situation awareness, inappropriate decision making, and poor airmanship" (AIB Report, 2017:3).

Furthermore, the AIB Report revealed that the plane was on its fourth flight on the day of the plane crash – the return leg of its second trip - when the crash occurred. Some media organisations had earlier reported that the ill-fated plane developed faults and was grounded in Uyo before it reportedly took off and crashed. However, Dana Air's Director of Flight Operations, Oscar Wason, refuted these claims by stating that the grounded plane in Uyo was not the same as the one that crashed.

The revelations of the AIB put to rest the cause(s) of the plane crash, albeit the Report was released five (5) years after the crash. In summary, the Report accused the pilot and engine failure as the plane crash causes. In other words, the accident was caused by human error, as evidence showed that the late pilot failed to follow the laid down emergency procedures of landing the aircraft at the nearest suitable airfield, which led to the crash. Also, there were concerns over the safety checks made on the engines before clearing the flight to take off. Therefore, it could be insinuated that the plane crash may have been prevented only if the pilot had observed the laid down decisions. Thus, these causal factors indicated human errors from Dana Air, necessary regulatory agencies, and not other external factors as previously insinuated.

After the plane crash, the Nigerian government grounded the flight operations of Dana Air throughout its five destinations and suspended its operating licence as the government commenced a full-scale investigation to unravel issues surrounding the

crash. The aftermath of the plane crash led to crisis and litigations for Dana Air and seemingly damaged its image and reputation. In response to the plane crash, Dana Air embarked on massive management of the crisis to save its reputation and stakeholders.

## **2.7 Crisis Communication Best Practices for the Aviation Industry**

In this section, an attempt is made to synthesise the crisis communication best practices in the aviation industry as found in the literature. The strategies listed are a combination from the studies of Vincent Covello, Robert Heath, Peter Sandman, Caroline Sapriel, Matthew Seeger, Veil and Husted, and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) as cited in Adebayo (2017). The strategies include:

- **Partnership with Stakeholders:** This involves efforts by airline industries to recognise the stakeholders as legitimate allies of an organisation. Successful partnerships with the stakeholders are important to how well airline organisations can manage a crisis and effectively communicate with the public.
- **Understand and listen to Stakeholder Concerns:** This involves efforts by the airline industries to maintain cordial relations and effectively communicate with the stakeholders and ensuring that their expectations. Understanding and listening to the concerns of the publics are crucial to how the publics will perceive the reputation of such airline organisations before, during and after crises.
- **Honesty, Candour and Openness:** This is the ability of airline organisations to maintain an honest, open and healthy relationship with stakeholders. Being honest and open with stakeholders could lead to trust and further improve the relationships with the stakeholders.
- **Accessibility and meeting the Information Needs of the media:** This has to do with the ability of airline organisations to maintain a deliberate and constant communication with the media throughout the crisis life cycle. A deliberate media relationship is necessary for an effective crisis communication process as the media is primarily one of the major crisis information dissemination channels available to airline organisations to reach the public.

- **Communicating with Empathy, Compassion and concern:** During crises, crisis managers are expected to show compassion, concern and empathy to the crisis and victims. To this end, it is expected that the crisis communication messages from the organisations to the stakeholders, including victims and their families, must contain messages of concern, sympathy and compassion. Often, when lives are lost to plane crashes, crisis messages and actions from airline organisations must be filled with empathy and concern. These actions portray such organisations as responsible, credible and alive to the emotions of victims and stakeholders.
- **Accept uncertainty and ambiguity:** It has been well established that crises create uncertainties for organisations. Thus, airline organisations must acknowledge the ambiguity that is associated with the crisis. Crisis managers must ensure that they do not make empty promises to the stakeholders under pressure that they cannot fulfill.
- **Planning for a swift response:** Literature on crisis communication is replete with information on being prepared for possible crises outbreak. Thus, crisis managers are advised to plan to respond promptly to crises. Airline organisations should have a crisis response framework which should respond to the questions of who, what, when and where of the crisis. The initial crisis information that answers the who, what, when and where of the crisis is what crisis scholars have referred to as instructing information.
- **Acknowledge the different cultural differences of the stakeholders:** Airline organisations have different stakeholder groups. These stakeholder groups have different cultural, religious and racial backgrounds and will likely interpret and perceive crisis messages differently. Thus, the ability of crisis managers in the airline industry to recognise these differences among the stakeholder groups will assist in crafting and disseminating non-offensive messages to the stakeholder groups.
- **Managing the next-of-kin Information:** During crises that result from plane crashes, airline organisations must be prepared to manage and support the next-of-kin of the victims of the crash. Thus, the organisations must have structures

that provide necessary support and compensation to injured victims and families of dead victims.

- **Self-efficiency:** A critical action that organisations in crisis must take is to provide the necessary information needed by stakeholders to make sense of the crises and to protect them physically and emotionally from harm (adjusting information). Therefore, besides providing instructing information, organisations must provide adjusting information that also recognizes the ability of the stakeholders to make choices and handle the crisis in their way.

## **2.8 Review of Empirical Studies**

This section is an empirical review of related studies in crisis communication discourse. It commences with related studies on crisis communication strategies and analyses the findings of each study. It then moves to examine studies on stakeholder perceptions of crisis and crisis strategies. Finally, this section examines related studies on organisational reputation and how the selection of crisis response strategies can assist in gaining favourable perceptions from stakeholders. The review is done by analysing relevant related studies locally and globally while exploring points of convergence and divergence among these studies.

Although no universally accepted definition of a crisis has been agreed on by crisis scholars, however, they all agree that no organisation is immune to crisis and that crises have the potential to damage the reputation of organisations and also harm stakeholders. Besides, an organisation's stakeholders are more likely to intensify the pressure on such organisation through various media (Meer et al. 2017). Therefore, Ray (1999) cited in Stephens et al. (2005) reiterated that communicating with stakeholders during crisis could influence their (stakeholders) perception of such organisations and could assist in maintaining or restoring a positive or damaged organisational image and reputation. In addition, while communicating with stakeholders, organisations could maximize such opportunities to bolster their images by informing and reminding the stakeholders about their values, missions and operations.

Crisis communication research has over the years, undergone several noticeable phases. For instance, early research focused on organisational crises by examining the

organisations in crisis and factors that led to the crisis (Meer et al, 2017). After this phase, studies began to examine how crises were managed by focusing on the messages sent out by organisations in crisis. The idea behind this second phase was to determine how organisations could respond to crises, as it was not enough to determine the factors that led to the crisis only. Therefore, there was the need to prevent a reoccurrence of the crisis and protect the reputation of the organisation (Arpan and Pompper, 2003; Lee, 2004; Huang, 2006, Seeger 2006; An and Cheng, 2010; Holladay, 2010; Fediuk, Coombs and Botero, 2010). Hence, crisis messages are expected to assist in reducing the reputational damages caused by a crisis.

Furthermore, studies have also been conducted to examine how crisis communication strategies can influence the way stakeholders will perceive a crisis and the reputation of the organisation. For instance, Coombs and Holladay (1996) investigated the strategies employed by organisations to respond to crises and its influence on the perceptions of stakeholders. Interestingly, their study, employing an experimental method, sought to provide a partial test of a symbolic approach to crisis management by matching crisis type with response strategies. For the cases tested, findings reinforced the use of crisis response strategies to persuade stakeholders that there was no crisis, assisted in changing the perceptions of stakeholders to perceive the crisis as less negative, and, thus, see the organisation more positively. Thus, crisis response strategies proved effective as the organisations successfully convinced stakeholders about the extent of the incidents.

In another study conducted by Stephens, Malone and Bailey (2005), they examined the message strategies employed by organisations during crises to communicate information that involved technical details to stakeholders. To achieve the aims of their study, the authors created a convenience sample of 10 cases that consisted of crises that required technical translation. These cases included crises that resulted from natural disasters, technical breakdowns, challenges, human breakdowns, malevolence, megadamage, organisational misdeeds, workplace violence, and rumours. The findings from their study supported the use of different crisis-message strategies to communicate with different stakeholders. The findings from their study also revealed that when technical details were discussed, such organisations seldom went beyond a direct mention of the technical facts with little or no explanations to stakeholders. Thus, their findings implied that different message strategies must be crafted for

different stakeholders based on the stakeholders involvement in the crisis. Also, the authors suggested that for crisis involving technical details, there must be a breakdown of such details for the proper understanding of stakeholders.

In another study, Coombs and Holladay (2008) cited in Claeys and Cauberghe (2012) examined the effectiveness of crisis communication strategies during crises. Their study tested the effectiveness of some crisis response strategies on crisis victims and their perceptions of the reputation of the organisation. Their findings revealed that the *compensation* and *sympathy* crisis strategies were as effective as the *apology* crisis strategy in influencing the perception of stakeholders on the organisation taking responsibility for the crisis. Also, the rationale behind the use of the compensation, sympathy and apology strategies was to focus on the needs of the crisis victims. Thus, for this study, paying compensation accompanied with sympathy was effective in influencing the perception of stakeholders towards the attribution of crisis responsibility.

Similarly, Xu and Li (2013) conducted a case study to determine the ethical stakeholder approaches to crisis communication. Their study, employing secondary data to analyse the case, focused on Foxconn's 2010 employee suicide crisis, where twelve (12) employees committed suicide within 5 months. Their research found that one of the key causes of Foxconn's suicide epidemic was the company's unwillingness to recognise employees as major stakeholders, as well as a lack of ethics of justice and concern for them. Their findings also revealed that because Foxconn employed the "*no comment*" and "*denial*" strategies after the first and ninth suicide case, stakeholders lost trust in them. Their crisis messages were also found to be inconsistent while their strategies were reactive, rather than proactive. Thus, stakeholders perceived the strategies as weak which led to a loss of trust in the organisation and further had a negative reputation. The Foxconn crisis case is an example of the likely consequences of neglecting a critical stakeholder group and the use of inappropriate crisis response strategies.

Despite the fact that Foxconn employees were the most impacted stakeholders and received the most media and public attention during the crisis, they remained the most disadvantaged stakeholders in Foxconn's agenda. The organisation had treated employees in several demeaning ways which led to the twelve (12) suicide cases. The

findings of this study carries implications for crisis communication discourse. One implication is that the stakeholders (internal and external) will determine if and when there is a crisis. Also, the *no comment* strategy, that is, not saying anything about a crisis, especially when stakeholders are aware of the crisis, could be a negative strategy for organisations. For Foxconn, the *no comment* strategy led to a loss of faith, trust, and belief in the organisation by its employees.

In another study conducted by Kelley (2014) on the response strategy to a University crisis, mixed reputational perceptions were observed among the various stakeholder groups – staff and student groups. The crisis communication strategy employed by the University ensured that staff stakeholder groups had positive reputations of the institution while student stakeholder groups perceived the reputation less favourably and had less supportive potential behaviours. This study is another example of the need to craft tailored response strategies to the different stakeholder groups as different stakeholders will react to crises differently.

A different approach to examining crisis response strategies has seen organisations employ social media in responding to crises. For instance, Hosseinali-Mirza, Marcellis-Warin and Warin (2015) examined crisis communication strategies and reputation risk in the online social media environment. Based on an in-depth investigation of eight (8) social media crises that emerged as a result of information distributed through social media platforms from 2007 to 2011, their study attempted to understand how eight (8) organisations in various industries and sizes engaged with stakeholders. The authors observed that earlier response strategies (from the traditional media) were not entirely applicable to managing crises that emanated from social media channels. Therefore, employing the exploratory qualitative method of case studies, the authors examined the crisis communication strategies which were mentioned in both online and offline news media. Hence, data was collected from secondary data sources such as online organisational press releases, online newspaper and magazine articles, websites, and online discussion fora.

The findings from Hosseinali-Mirza et al. (2015) study revealed that social media crises could occur from various sources, either from the mainstream media, stakeholders or from other organisations, thus making crises information go viral within seconds. Also, the findings from their study revealed that a majority of the

organisations examined delayed their responses to the crisis which caused several negatives outcomes on their reputation. In addition, the *apology* and *compensation* tactics topped the most frequently employed strategies. In all, their study expanded the understanding of how organisations responded to social media crises. Although crises could emanate from social media, it is necessary to respond to such crises using both online and traditional media as not every stakeholder may have access to social media (platforms).

Similarly, another social media crisis study was conducted by Liu, Austin and Jin (2011) on how stakeholders responded to crisis communication strategies by examining the relationship between crisis information and crisis source. Also, their study sought to evaluate the Social Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC) model - a model that helps organisations to generate desired outcomes and understanding of the reactions of the publics on social media. The SMCC posits that the publics use social media platforms to engage with organisations during crises to gain relevance of the issue (crisis), to seek information, and to vent their emotions/support to the organisation. Therefore, the SMCC, newly introduced at the time Liu et al.'s (2011) study was conducted, was tested to determine stakeholders response by either gaining relevance of the issue or seeking information which would translate into either supporting the organisation or venting their anger. Their study, however, focused on the effects of crisis information from traditional media, social media, and word-of-mouth as well as the source of information (either from the organisation or a third party). The experimental research method was employed for the study as participants were required to measure their responses to several crisis scenarios. The findings revealed that the way organisations selected crisis information from and the source usually had an influence on the publics' perceptions and attributions on dependent and independent emotions. Also, findings indicated that organisations must match crisis information and source when responding to a crisis. Thus, the findings from the initial test of the SMCC are also similar to those of the SCCT which recommended matching crisis response strategies with crisis types.

One key focus of crisis response strategies is to favourably position a crisis and the organisation in the minds of stakeholders. Early crisis research, however, neglected stakeholder perspectives of a crisis. The stakeholder neglect was observed by Coombs (2007) when he opined that little was known about stakeholders – who could be



harmed during crises - and their reactions and or perceptions to organisational crises. Extant literature has revealed the importance of stakeholders to organisations. More so, stakeholders are extremely important groups in crises. This is because they determine if there is a crisis or not. As Coombs (2009) cited in Heath (2010:100) opined, "...crises are largely perceptual. If stakeholders believe there is a crisis, the organisation is in a crisis, unless it can successfully persuade stakeholders it is not." Thus, the neglect of stakeholder perspectives led crisis communication scholars to investigate the reactions or perceptions of stakeholders to crisis communication messages sent out by the organisation (Coombs and Holladay, 2006; Jin and Cameron, 2007; Fediuk, Coombs and Botero, 2010; Jin and Pang, 2010, cited in Coombs and Holladay 2013).

However, the findings from the studies on earlier stakeholder perspectives to organisational crises often revealed stakeholders as having a single perspective (Coombs and Holladay, 2002, 2007; Coombs, 2004; Jin, Pan and Cameron, 2010; Kelley, 2014). The single stakeholder perspective is understandable as most of these studies examined the perspectives of single stakeholder groups to crises. These studies did not take cognisance of the fact that even though organisations may have diverse stakeholders, made up of different individuals and groups, they will form different perspectives to a crisis. The next section, therefore, examines empirical studies on stakeholders' perspectives and reactions to organisational crises. First, we examine external and internal stakeholder perceptions/reactions to crises.

The literature on external stakeholders' viewpoints or reactions to crises and crisis communication strategies demonstrates that crisis communication research is dominated by external stakeholders' perceptions. Establishing positive relationships and having a reservoir of goodwill with stakeholders before a crisis is crucial to effective crisis management, according to research in this field. For instance, McDonald, Sparks and Glendon (2010) conducted a study that examined stakeholder reactions to causes of an organisational crisis and the way the crisis was communicated. The goal of their research was to understand how a hierarchy of five crisis communication tactics and four crisis cases affected stakeholders' reactions. Employing an experimental research design, 4500 copies of a questionnaire were sent out to respondents while 942 copies were retrieved. Participants were required to react to pseudo-events that appeared on the front-page newspaper stories to determine their

effects on involvement, responsibility, and emotions. The findings from this study revealed that the *confession* response strategy was the most preferred strategy aimed at reducing stakeholder anger and thus increasing loyalty, sympathy, and attitude. Also, the study revealed that stakeholders' crisis influenced emotions from participants. Overall, the study's findings demonstrated that an organisation's level of crisis control was the single most powerful predictor of stakeholder reactions.

In an attempt to increase the body of knowledge around discussions on the relationships between organisations and their stakeholders, Ji, Li, North and Liu (2016) examined stakeholders' perspectives on how the social media relationship between organisations and its stakeholders can assist or ruin the reputation of organisations. The uniqueness of this study was the social media angle, as the emphasis was on the engagement levels through stakeholders' behaviours and reactions towards social media messages and organisational reputation. To achieve the aims of this study, the authors conducted a content analysis of 5-year longitudinal data on Fortune 500 companies' Facebook posts. Two levels of Facebook engagements, *shallow engagement* was operationalized by the number of likes and shares for each Facebook post from January 2009 to December 2013, and *profound engagement* was operationalized by the number of negative, positive, and neutral comments. The findings from the study revealed only positive and negative comments among the different stakeholders' as significant indicators of organisational reputation. Also, negative comments had a negative influence on reputation while positive comments had a positive influence on the reputation of the organisations. Again, the findings from the study are aligned with the stakeholder theory which states that stakeholder's active communication behaviour with an organisation significantly affects their relationships and evaluations of the reputation of organisations.

In another study, Hu and Pang (2016) examined the perceptions of public relations (PR) practitioners' on the use of crisis response strategies in China. The study aimed to examine the views of PR practitioners on identified crisis response strategies such as barnacle, third-party endorsements, and setting up new topics and juxtaposed them with the socio-contextual factors that contributed to the use of those strategies. Qualitative data was generated through interviews with 20 corporate communications or crisis management practitioners who worked with the 20 top PR companies in China and who had between three to five years' experience. The findings from the

study revealed that the strategies of barnacle, third-party endorsements, and setting up new topics were specific to the Chinese context and largely influenced by cultural backgrounds, political power, nature of media, and the organisation's problematic statuses. Thus, findings from this study are instructive on the importance of context in crisis communication, as different crisis contexts will likely produce different results.

Furthermore, Meer, Verhoeven, Beentjes and Vliegenhart (2017) conducted a study that examined how stakeholder relationships with organisations changed before, during, and after crisis events compared to no-crises periods. The authors studied how pressure from both internal and external stakeholders influenced the way public relations (PR) professionals related with stakeholders after a crisis. Four hundred and forty-four (444) European PR professionals were purposively selected as they were usually responsible for interacting with the stakeholders. In addition, the study included PR experts who have dealt with organisational crises. The mediating functions of time, pressure, and uncertainty received special emphasis. The findings demonstrated that increased pressure from the media, residents, and employees had a negative impact on the communicative relationship with specific stakeholders during the crisis, although management pressure had a favorable impact. The findings from this study, are in tandem with the stakeholder theory which posits that stakeholders determine when there is a crisis and this perception affects their relationships with the organisation during crises.

In a more recent study, Kusano and Sanada (2019) investigated the International Accounting Standards Board's (IASB) response to criticism and political pressure during the global financial crisis. The study combined a historical narrative with an inductive analysis of historical events using a process-tracing approach, adopting the causal pathways between the financial crisis and the organisation's response. The findings from the study revealed that the IASB encountered severe criticisms of its accounting standards during the financial crisis. These criticisms, thus, negatively affected its legitimacy before stakeholders. However, in response to these criticisms, the IASB adopted the legitimation strategies of *normalization* and *restructuring* to repair its legitimacy.

The empirical reviews conducted from the studies above revealed that the external stakeholder perspectives to crises dominated stakeholder crises discourse. Stakeholders

have primarily been recognized as either primary or secondary or internal and external. As Adamu, Mohamad and Rahman (2016) opined, the internal complexities of crisis communication had long been ignored within the field of crisis communication research. Therefore, there needed to be empirical evidence of internal stakeholder perspectives. Indeed, Taylor (2010) cited in Frandsen and Johansen (2011), observed that investigating and understanding the internal dynamics of organisations was the future of crisis communication research. As a result, in response to a need for additional research on the internal dimensions of crisis communication, current studies in the field have begun to look into the perspectives of internal stakeholders in crisis communication. These studies (Frandsen and Johansen, 2011; Johansen, Aggerholm and Frandsen, 2012; Strandberg and Vigso, 2016; Adamu, Mohamad and Rahman, 2018; Greene and Ferguson, 2018 among others), have examined internal communication and internal stakeholder perspectives to crisis and crisis response strategies.

For instance, Johansen et al. (2012) investigated internal crisis management and crisis communication in organisations by looking at the key findings from a major survey of internal crisis management and crisis communication performed among public and private organisations in Denmark in the spring of 2011. This quantitative study employed the questionnaire to gather data from 367 largest private organisations and 98 public organisations in Denmark to understand how organisations perceived, planned, coordinated, and implemented the crisis management and crisis communication activities before, during, and after crises. The findings from the survey revealed that a large majority of Danish organisations had crisis plans; most of which further contained internal dimensions that showed guidelines for communicating with internal stakeholders during crises.

Also, Strandberg and Vigso (2015) contributed to the discussions on internal stakeholders' crisis communication by highlighting the roles of communication in the ways employees made sense of crises through organisational culture and rumour. The study was a qualitative one with interviews conducted with managers and employees in a Swedish organisation where a former employee was indicted of embezzling approximately 25 million SEK. This study focused on how information was disseminated to the employees and what they made out of the information. The findings revealed that crisis communication was successful to external stakeholders

and the media. However, the internal employees and managers had divergent views of communication. Whereas employees believed that the management failed to provide them with adequate information they needed to make sense of the crisis, managers, on the other hand, believed that because the crisis was not due to cultural issues there was no need to give full information. In addition, shifting the blame on the former employee was perceived as a way of dodging cultural problems. Hence, the authors concluded that crises could strengthen existing patterns within a dysfunctional culture as the results could be applied to most kinds of commercial or non-commercial organisations.

Furthermore, Snoeijers and Poels (2017) examined the internal stakeholder dynamics that influenced the perceptions of an organisational crisis. The study designed a scenario-based survey with an unfolding crisis along with measurements of crisis prevention. The survey research method was then employed by members of the Belgian National Defence Department. Their findings revealed that the background, position within the hierarchy, crisis timing as well as experience were factors that could influence stakeholders' perception of crisis. The implications of the findings from this study on crisis communication scholarship implies that although the study was conducted using a single case, findings could not be generalized to all internal stakeholders.

Also, Greene and Ferguson (2018) examined how the corporate communication team at Kaiser Permanente (KP) in Southern California communicated the necessary damages during the 2014 Ebola outbreak in the US. This study became necessary after one patient in Dallas, TX, was reported dead as a result of the Ebola virus. The study employed a textual analysis of internal communications documents, including newsletters, company-wide emails, training documents, and other corporate communication tools. The documents were analysed from October 2014 and January 2015. The findings revealed that internal stakeholders will support the organisation during and after a crisis when they are adequately communicated.

Empirical evidence also exists on stakeholders' perceptions of the reputation of organisations. For instance, Radtke (2011) examined the crisis communication strategies employed by Google in Germany during its response to a public uproar on the introduction of Street View, “a feature that makes it possible to explore streets and

places worldwide through a 360-degree street-level imagery” (Radke, 2007: 30). The introduction of the Street View meant that individuals or users could view a place and explore other places around the globe using this Google service even before visiting the place. The introduction, however, created panic among a section of the stakeholders as they felt it was an invasion of their privacy through the internet. Therefore, some stakeholder groups did not receive this invention with open arms, and rather rebelled against it which led to a crisis for Google and threatened their reputation.

The data from this single case study was generated qualitatively through content analysis and quantitatively using an online survey. Data for the content analysis was gathered from 390 randomly selected media articles and was analysed using the discourse analysis. The findings revealed that Google employed the *deny strategy* along with the *instructing information* when responding to the public accusations during the crisis. Their findings are, however, in contrast with the recommendations of the SCCT’s which stated that the diminish strategies (providing justifications for the crisis) should be employed in an accidental crisis. According to Radtke (2011), if Google had employed the diminish strategies, it may have weakened the public debate. Also, findings showed that a majority of the respondents had a positive attitude towards Google and its new services, an indication that the crisis did not influence stakeholders’ confidence in the organisation. However, the respondents agreed that the attitude shown towards the invention of the Street View could damage the reputation of the organisation. Findings are instructive because one would expect that the Street View crisis would damage the reputation of Google. However, it appeared that Google had a strong reputation and stakeholder relationship before the crisis which worked for them during the crisis.

Studies on organisational crisis and organisational reputation have revealed a high reputation as a benefit to organisations because of the social capital and goodwill stakeholders had built over time. On the other hand, however, other studies found organisational reputation to be a burden to organisations during and after crises because of the heightened stakeholder attention and expectancy violations associated with the aftermath of the crises. In finding a mechanism that could be used to determine whether reputation was a burden or benefit, Zavyalova, Pfarrer, Reger and Hubbard (2016) theorized that stakeholders’ level of organisational identification

would help to explain the most dominant mechanism. Their study tested this hypothesis by employing experimental methods on members of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) on a longitudinal organisational-level data from 1999 – 2009. Their findings revealed a high reputation as a burden for organisations when considering low-identification stakeholder support. In addition, high reputation was also beneficial when considering high-identification stakeholder support. Thus, their findings showed that stakeholder groups with different levels of organisational identification would interpret and react differently to a negative event. Hence, organisational crisis managers would employ findings from this study to develop response strategies for various stakeholder groups based on their interactions with the organisations.

Taking a different perspective, Schultz, Utz and Goritz (2011) analysed the effects of traditional and social media strategies on the way stakeholders perceived the reputation of organisations. The authors investigated the effects of crisis communication strategy and the crisis medium on organisations reputation, secondary crisis and communication. They sought to fill the need for examining the effect of different media, especially social media on stakeholders in crisis communication. Employing the 3 (medium: newspaper, blog, Twitter) x 3 (reaction: information, apology, sympathy) experimental design on a total of 1677 participants, their findings revealed that the medium of news had more effect than the message itself as the choice of media had an effect on secondary crisis communication. Also, their findings showed that Twitter was the only medium that harmed stakeholders as they employed Twitter to share online newspaper news.

The first part of the empirical reviews examined crisis communication, response strategies and stakeholder engagements in crises. Next, an overview of crises resulting from plane crashes becomes necessary to understand how these organisations managed the crisis. Organisational crisis resulting from plane crashes are common occurrences which have attracted interests from crisis communication scholars. This is because plane crashes usually lead to the loss of lives and property and gains wide attention from the media, the government and citizens. Therefore, the way airline organisations respond to a crisis would often determine the perceptions and reactions of stakeholders to the reputation of these airline organisations. Hence, crisis responses by airline organisations as well as the management of the crises are of utmost importance to

crisis managers. This section is a review of crisis communication studies on plane crash crisis.

In a study by Henderson (2003), a Singapore Airline Flight SQ006 from Singapore to Angeles crashed into a construction equipment in Taiwan on 31 October 2000. Out of the 179 passengers on board, 83 lost their lives while several others sustained varying degree of injuries. The resulting crisis was heightened as Singapore Airlines was unable to conduct a full investigation into the crash because the plane crashed into the terrain of another country. To compound the issue, the Taiwanese authorities blamed the airline and the pilot for taking the wrong runway. Although the Singaporean authorities failed to agree with the findings from the Taiwanese authorities, the Chief Executive Officer of Singapore Airlines ultimately saved the reputation of his organisation by employing a strategy that has been hailed as a brave one by stakeholders. He accepted *full responsibility* for the crash on behalf of the organisation and initiated plans to support the victims and their families.

In another study, Gerken, Van der Land and Van der Meer (2016) explored the effectiveness of organisational crisis-response strategies and online public responses based on frame alignment after the disappearance of AirAsia flight QZ8501 from the radar with 162 passengers on board. The aircraft was had left Surabaya, Indonesia to Singapore on December 28, 2014. Gerven et al.'s (2016) study is unique as it examined stakeholder responses on social media (Facebook) where opinions could be laid without word limitations unlike Twitter. Between December 28, 2014, and January 28, 2015, the total sample framed comprised of 38 posts with 13,305 comments gathered from the Facebook page - the time from the initial statement of the flight's disappearance till one month later. A multi-stage embedded design was used in this single case study technique. A quantitative content analysis was undertaken in the first step to discover and determine AirAsia's crisis response techniques. The frames in the publics' comments were then disclosed by a semantic-network analysis. Finally, AirAsia's frame alignment level and those of the publics were quantitatively analysed. The findings revealed a predominant use of informational strategy (adjusting information) employed by AirAsia in responding to the crisis. The findings further revealed an absence of frame alignment between AirAsia's response and those of the publics. The findings from this study offer useful insights into the impact of airline crisis on their reputation. For example, airline organisations must take the comments,



reactions and perceptions of their publics into consideration when responding to crises. They must also provide regular and timely responses to enquiries from the public.

In addition, Kim (2016)'s study examined the perceptions and behaviours of stakeholders in crisis communication. His study also investigated, through news framing, stakeholders' perceptions and behaviours after an airline crash crisis (Asiana Airline in South Korea). The Asiana Airline Flight 214 with 307 passengers on board crashed as it approached the San Francisco International Airport on July 6, 2013, killing three teenage girls from China and injuring 181 others (Karp, 2013 cited in Kim, 2013). An online experiment of an actual airline crash crisis was, therefore, conducted between groups randomly assigned to two different framing and control groups. Ethical approvals from participants were sought. Participants were then presented to the crisis event through documented press releases from the airline before they were separated into three groups of no-frame news story news group, the preventable crisis group and the accidental crisis news group. The study found that the crisis was accidental which led to a low attribution of crisis responsibility. The low attribution level of crisis responsibility supports the SCCT assertions that accidental crisis types would often produce low attributions of crisis responsibility while preventable crises lead to strong attribution of crisis responsibility. Their findings further provided actual evidence of how news framing could influence crisis communication and subsequently the perception of stakeholders towards the crisis and reputation of the organisation.

Furthermore, Ashari, Ahmad and Samani (2017) explored the crisis response strategies and crisis type suitability of the Malaysian MH 370 airline. Their study examined the appropriateness of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) applied by the Malaysian Airlines System (MAS) during the mysterious disappearance of the flight MH370 airline on the 8th of March, 2014. Hence, their study was a test of the *matching crisis with the response strategy* of the SCCT. This study also explored the use of Facebook as the social media platform in reaching out to stakeholders. This case study method research employed content analysis from official media statements from MAS to its stakeholders on its official Facebook page. It is interesting to observe that the authors only limited the statements from MAS to the first day of the disappearance of the aircraft to eliminate the chances of the crisis being influenced by other media such as news media reports, blogs and other opinions by third parties. Hence, the

authors only sought to examine the authenticity of the organisations response to the crisis by examining the first day of responses to stakeholders. Therefore a total of seven (7) media statements were analysed using thematic content analysis to examine the way the statements were framed.

The findings from the study revealed that the crisis was framed as a technical-error accident that could have been avoided. Also, the findings revealed the lowest type of crisis as the victim cluster, specifically, the rumour type. One major finding that struck this researcher's interest in this study was that there was no accurate indication of physical injuries to passengers of the flight which was not captured by the SCCT. In other words, SCCT projects injuries to stakeholders as potential reputational damage to organisations. However, Ashari *et al* (2017) found statements related to uncertain physical injuries to passengers, which was not covered by the SCCT. Hence, this shows that the SCCT could include a new crisis type that speaks to the uncertainty of injured persons. In conclusion, the study depicted a high level of appropriateness between the MAS flight MH370 crisis and the SCCT as the diminish strategy, as the justification for the disappearance of the MAS370 airline was mostly employed.

Furthermore, Benoit (2017) investigated the crisis that ensued when a United Airlines physically removed a passenger, David Dao, from one of its airplanes. The event occurred on April 9, 2017, when Flight 3411 which departed Chicago Illinois to Louisville, Kentucky substituted four flight crew members for passengers who were already seated. The security personnel were then filmed physically dragging Dao through the aisle and off the plane (Singh, 2017 cited in Benoit, 2017) which led to severe bleeding, concussion, a broken nose and loss of two teeth (McCann, 2017 cited in Benoit, 2017). To further compound the situation, the CEO of United Airlines, Oscar Munoz, who would rather have apologized to Dao, declared that Dao's behaviour caused his removal from the airplane. He, however, apologised to the other passengers. The crisis that ensued negatively affected the reputation of United Airlines as findings revealed that stakeholders ranked them as the worst airline while their perception of the reputation of the organisation skyrocketed to 42% from an initial 7% the previous year (Benoit, 2017). Hence, the study examined the image repair strategies employed by United Airlines. The findings revealed that the CEO was forced to offer both *mortification* and *corrective action* strategies to undo his earlier offensive act error. The findings further revealed the prominence of social media in

escalating crisis and in image repair. The author proposes *corrective action* as another important strategy in crisis communication.

In addition, Adebayo (2017) examined the application of social media – Facebook - to the crisis communication management of the Malaysian Airline flight M17 crash. The intriguing aspect of this study was that the flight M17 crash occurred just four months after the flight MH 370 crash by the same Malaysian Airlines. This would have been an extremely difficult period for Malaysian Airlines as their reputation would have been on an all-time low following the recurring airline crash. It also attracted heavy media scrutiny and reactions globally. The study adopted an exploratory investigation of a single case crisis study by employing observational methods and content analysis of crisis response messages from the organisation to stakeholders through their official Facebook pages and website. Stakeholders' perceptions were also measured from their responses to the crisis messages released by Malaysian Airlines on Facebook. Findings revealed that MAS was prompt in responding to the crisis by employing the stealing thunder approach – a self-disclosure strategy about a crisis. Also, MAS greatly employed social media channels in tackling the crisis, as well as traditional crisis communication channels in responding to stakeholder concerns.

Furthermore, Labadorf (2018) examined Southwest Airlines' crisis response during the mid-flight engine failure of flight 1380 which led to the death of a passenger. The aircraft, a Boeing 737 took off from LaGuardia to Dallas Love and suffered a left-side engine failure caused by a broken fan blade (Labadorf, 2018). The resultant effect knocked out a passenger, Jennifer Riordan, who died later from traumatic injuries. The engine failure of the aircraft and the death of Riordan led to a series of reputational crises for Southwest Airlines. The findings from Labadorf's (2018) study revealed that Southwest Airlines had in the past 47 years of its existence, experienced three significant crises - in 2005, 2016 and 2018. However, the current case (2018) was significant as its CEO, Gary Kelly, in his press conference stated that the damaged engine was inspected two days before the tragic incident and was not detectable since it was on the interior part of the fan blade. The revealing information from the CEO, somehow, lessened the reputational damage of the organisation as they assumed full responsibility for the incident. The organisation also employed the *apology* and *compensation* response strategies to the family of the victim and promised to provide further information to the public as soon as investigations were over. The findings of

the study are in line with the recommendations of the response strategies outlined by the SCCT. The sincerity of information, combined with apologies and compensation greatly assisted the organisation to maintain continuous relationships with its stakeholders.

Similarly, another study conducted by Zafra and Maydell (2018) on the disappearance of Malaysian Airlines (MAS) MH370. The disappearance of the MAS MH370 airline has become one of the most highly discussed and debated airline crises within the last decade. The flight MH370 was carrying an estimated 270 passengers, including 2 infants and 12 crew members from Malaysia and was scheduled to arrive Beijing, China on 8th March 2014 before its sudden disappearance. The sudden disappearance caused a crisis for the organisation as the flight MH370 was still not seen after 5 hours. The Malaysian Prime Minister, Najib Razak officially acknowledged that the missing airplane had crashed in the Southern Indian Ocean without any probable survivors on March 24, 2014, more than two weeks after it was declared missing (Zafra and Maydell, 2018, citing Loh 2014). As a result, during the first two weeks of the crisis, this study examined MAS's connection with the media as well as their online communication strategies. Using a single case study, the authors gathered two layers of publicly available data to understand the stakeholders' relationship and media handling during the disaster. First, from March 8 to 24, 2014, an online search was undertaken for news reports that were published during the first two weeks of the crisis. Next, the authors examined MAS online and traditional crisis communication practices by monitoring their website and other online activities, including press releases and press conferences published within this period.

The findings from the study revealed the *compassion* response strategy as the initial strategy employed by MAS as their reputation was questioned. Besides, the authorities of MAS failed to provide consistent information to stakeholders as they also did not have enough information to give. This further led to heightened foreign media coverage of the crisis thereby labelling MAS as having a weak relationship with the press. Hence, the communication strategies employed by MAS during the first two weeks of the disappearance of flight MH370 showed information void and lack of proper handling of the media and showed lack of preparation in dealing with scrutiny from the international media which threatened their reputation. Ultimately, the Airline

struggled to create a credible image for the international community due to the foreign media's coverage of the crisis.

These empirical studies were conducted outside Nigeria. However, this does not mean that there are no crisis communication-related studies in Nigeria. This study acknowledges that despite the almost daily occurrences of crises in Nigeria, empirical evidence on crisis communication studies are not as many as when compared with those from the Western clime. This could be a result of the non-documentation of crisis cases among communication scholars. Also, organisations in crisis in Nigeria are unwilling to provide crisis information to scholars. Again, this could be due to the imbalance between research and practice in Nigeria as, often, there is no synergy between academia and other organisations. There is also the paucity of crisis information, as what obtains is a selective sharing of organisational crisis information. However, Pratt (2012) has attempted to document a few empirical crisis cases in Nigeria. For instance, Olaniran and Williams (2008) cited in Pratt (2012) examined the responses of Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) to its oil spills in the Niger Delta region. Findings from this study revealed several contradictions to previous similar crisis cases. The strategies employed by SPDC were *scapegoating*, that is, blaming communities for the damage to the oil spills, and *denying and evading responsibility*, an outright denial of the causes of environmental pollution and degradation.

Also, to further reduce ethno-religious crises that have pervaded Nigeria for a while, Pratt (2012) noted that the Nigerian government employed the *corrective actions* and *deal posture* strategies of the Image Restoration Theory and the SCCT. Therefore, as part of their communication responses to the crisis, the governments set up commissions of inquiry, which called for memoranda, organized public hearings, and visited the affected crisis areas. Nigeria's Institute of Governance and Social Research, the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, and the Nigerian Red Cross also held a series of fora, peace conferences, roundtables, and workshops on how to best manage the ethnic problem in the country (Pratt, 2012).

In another study, Ajibade (2013) examined a synthesis of the crisis experienced or caused by students in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. His research found that the following measures were made by concerned authorities (at the government and

institutional levels) to manage the students' crises: Institutions must be closed immediately, with students given an ultimatum to depart their halls of residence and premises; student unions and their executives must be suspended or dissolved. Also, when the crises had national impacts, the government often reacted by proscribing the Students' Union Organisation at the national level. Other strategies mentioned included rustication or outright expulsion of student leaders and the use of security forces like the police/army to maintain law and order in the affected institution.

In addition, Olawale (2014) conducted a study that examined the crisis management strategies and their effect on organisational performance using empirical evidence among employees (internal stakeholders) of Promassidor Ltd. His findings revealed that the challenges experienced by the management in the implementation of their crisis management strategies were attributed to poor organisational performance. The study further revealed that the crisis management strategies did not have any effect on organisational performance.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the crisis communication strategies when used with varying crises, according to the SCCT, would almost be effective. Only a few studies from the reviewed literature revealed the inappropriateness of the SCCT. However, the same cannot be said about Nigeria. This study, therefore, examines the crisis strategy employed by Dana Air in its response to the 2012 plane crash crisis.

## **2.10 Theoretical Framework**

Theories are a set of varying status and origin which seek to explain or interpret some phenomenon (McQuail, 2010). Thus, this study employed the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) and the Stakeholders Theory to explain and explore the Dana Air crisis. These theories are critically examined in the proposed study.

### **2.10.1 The Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)**

The Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) is one of the most commonly used and researched theories in the field of crisis communication. The SCCT was introduced by William Timothy Coombs in 1995 as a framework for "understanding how stakeholders will react/respond to a crisis in terms of reputational threat and projects how people will react to the crisis response strategies used to manage the

crisis” (Coombs 2007:163). The SCCT has over the years, been tested, polished, and further developed into a more comprehensible theory (Khyn, 2008).

The SCCT was informed by the Attribution Theory – a theory which explains how humans make causal attributions to a crisis. The Attribution Theory predicts that people will search for the causes of events following a crisis (especially negative ones) and thereby use the information they have gathered to attribute responsibility for the cause(s) of the negative event(s). Weiner (1985) cited in Adebayo (2017) posited that the (negative) experiences or events are then used as a yardstick for evaluating future expectations. The SCCT, therefore, builds upon the Attribution Theory base, to further predict the reputational threats presented by crises and to recommends crisis response strategies intended to protect reputational assets (Coombs, 2007). The SCCT also shifts the emphasis of crisis response strategies from one that not only protects the reputation of organisations to “one that includes the protection of the stakeholders and the crisis victims; with the assumption that appropriate management of the organisation’s stakeholder will reduce the reputational damage that the organisation might experience when in crisis and protect them” (Adebayo, 2017:72). Thus, besides protecting organisational reputation, the SCCT also protect stakeholders and victims.

The SCCT further “draws upon the response strategies expressed in the Image Restoration Theory (IRT) by integrating those strategies into a system that predicts how stakeholders should react to the crisis and the crisis responses strategies used to manage the crisis” (Coombs 2007:171). The IRT focuses on what organisations can say (communication message strategies) when faced with a crisis, aimed at rebuilding/restoring the image of the organisation. Therefore, the SCCT can predict how the publics of an organisation will react to a crisis, and to the crisis response strategies employed to manage the crisis.

The SCCT's main focus is on the protection of an organisation's reputation. It regards crises as risks to an organisation's reputation and offers ways for protecting it. The theory posits that an organisation’s reputation is a valuable resource that could be damaged by a crisis (Coombs and Holladay, 2002) and proposes that by assessing the situation and selecting a crisis response strategy that matches the problem, a strategic communicative reaction can best maintain the reputational resource (Coombs and Holladay 2002; Khyu, 2008). The SCCT, thus, offers a conceptual link between crisis

response strategies and the crisis characteristics, which enables practitioners to manage crisis responses more effectively (Elmore, 2016). The conceptual link is carried out with the expectation that the response strategies will influence stakeholder perceptions of the reputation of the organisation.

The SCCT consists of three core elements. According to Coombs (2006: 243), these core elements include “(1) The crisis situation, (2) crisis response strategies, and (3) a system for matching the crisis situations to crisis response strategies.” The assumption behind these three core elements is that the effectiveness of communication strategies is dependent on the characteristics of the crisis situation. By understanding the crisis, a crisis manager can choose the most appropriate response that could be used to protect the reputation of the organisation. The core elements are discussed in the next section.

## **1. The Crisis Situation**

As earlier noted, a good understanding of any particular crisis will determine a lot about the crisis. Since crises largely affect the reputation of organisations, the SCCT suggests three factors that can help to shape reputational threats in crises (Coombs, 2007). These include (a) initial crisis responsibility, (b) crisis history, and (c) prior relational reputation.

### **(a) The Initial Crisis Responsibility**

The initial crisis responsibility investigates stakeholder perceptions of personal accountability for the organisation's issue (Coombs 1997). It demonstrates the extent to which stakeholders believe that organisational actions contributed to the crisis. As a result, the first crisis assessment and assumption is reliant on the organisation's ability to identify the crisis type correctly. Once the crisis type has been identified, the organisation is then required to use the knowledge of the crisis to determine the best response strategies of responding to the crisis. Once this has been determined, management can make adjustments based on the severity of the situation and their previous performance history (Coombs and Holladay, 2002).

Coombs and Holladay (2002) grouped, therefore, grouped crisis into various typologies using the apportioning of responsibility as the determining element. These typologies are - the victim, accident, and preventable clusters. For the *victim cluster*, The organisation is seen as a victim of circumstances and cannot be blamed for what



happened. In this situation, the organisation has the lowest amount of blame for the crisis. Natural disasters, product manipulation, rumours, and workplace violence are all instances of crises in this cluster.

The *accident cluster* is the type of crisis that occurs unintentionally or beyond the control of the organisation. This allows the organisation to take minimal responsibility for the crisis. Examples of crises in this cluster include technical error, megadamage, accident, product harm, and challenges. The third cluster according to Coombs and Holladay (2002) is the *preventable cluster*. This type of crisis occurs due to human error and organisational wrong doing. In this case, the organisation is fully held responsible for the crisis as the stakeholders perceive it as a premeditated action. Table 2.1 presents the SCCT crisis types, perceived threats, and accompanying responsibility.

**Table 2.1: SCCT Crisis Types, Perceived Threats and Accompanying Responsibility.**

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**Victim cluster:** In these crisis types, the organisation is also a victim of the crisis.

(Weak attributions of crisis responsibility = Mild reputational threat)

*Natural disaster:* Acts of nature damage an organisation such as an earthquake.

*Rumor:* False and damaging information about an organisation is being circulated.

*Workplace violence:* Current or former employee attacks current employees onsite.

*Product tampering/Malevolence:* External agent causes damage to an organisation.

**Accidental cluster:** In these crisis types, the organisational actions leading to the crisis were unintentional.

(Minimal attributions of crisis responsibility = Moderate reputational threat)

*Challenges:* Stakeholders claim an organisation is operating in an inappropriate manner.

*Technical-error accidents:* A technology or equipment failure causes an industrial accident.

*Technical-error product harm:* A technology or equipment failure causes a product to be recalled.

**Preventable cluster:** In these crisis types, the organisation knowingly placed people at risk, took inappropriate actions or violated a law/regulation.

(Strong attributions of crisis responsibility = Severe reputational threat)

*Human-error accidents:* Human error causes an industrial accident.

*Human-error product harm:* Human error causes a product to be recalled.

*Organisational misdeed with no injuries:* Stakeholders are deceived without injury.

*Organisational misdeed management misconduct:* Laws or regulations are violated by management.

*Organisational misdeed with injuries:* Stakeholders are placed at risk by management and injuries occur.

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**Source:** Coombs, W. T. (2007). Protecting organisation reputations during a crisis: The development and application of situational crisis communication theory. *Corporate Reputation Review* 10.(3):168.

### **(b) The Crisis History**

The crisis history examines if an organisation has or not experienced similar crises in the past as this similar history can be used to predict how the stakeholders will understand and react to the crisis (Coombs and Holladay, 2002; 2005). The crisis history is also an important factor in the choice of crisis response strategy because if there are previous records of similar crises in the organisation's life cycle, it could influence stakeholder's attribution of crisis responsibility. It is assumed that the stakeholders of such crisis-prone organisations will interpret crisis as something that the organisations have not been able to overcome.

### **(c) Prior Reputational Relationship**

This is the third factor that influences the type of crisis response strategy to be employed when managing a crisis. Prior relational reputation refers to how well or poorly an organisation is perceived to have treated stakeholders. According to the SCCT, a stakeholder's opinion of an organisation is formed not just by how it treats them during a crisis, but also by how the organisation treats them before and after the crisis. Similarly, Coombs and Holladay (2001) found that A negative prior relationship with stakeholders will enhance reputational damage, whereas a positive prior relationship will produce a neutral situation, as if there was no prior relationship or no crisis history. A negative reputational association moves the crisis responsibility up one step on the responsibility continuum, raising stakeholders' perceptions of responsibility for the crisis.

## **2. The Crisis Response Strategy**

The crisis response strategy in simple terms, is the response of an organisation to a crisis. Lai (2010) observed that crisis response strategies are tactics that an organisation employs when responding to the media and publics during a crisis. These tactics comprise what organisational leaders say and do during and after a crisis. The goal of the response strategies is to shape crisis attributions, change affected stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation, and decrease the negative impact of the crisis (Coombs, 2007; Kelley, 2014). That is, organisations must take responsibility for their actions and respond accordingly, using appropriate response strategies. Different

crises result in varying levels of predictable crisis culpability. As a result, the lower the attribution of responsibility to an organisation, the more the source of the crisis is viewed as being beyond its control. Stronger views of controllability result in higher blame attributions for a crisis (Coombs, 2007; Amiso and Pratt, 2012).

It is important to note that Coombs (2007) grouped these strategies into primary (deny, diminish, and rebuild) and secondary (Bolstering) crisis response strategies (see Table 2.2). Crisis managers can either deny responsibility for a crisis, give justifications for the crisis (aimed at reducing perceived responsibility) or take full responsibility for the crisis and tender apologies. Table 2.2 reveals the available crisis response strategies available in the SCCT, which crisis managers can use when responding to crises. Explanations of these strategies are presented after Table 2.2:

**Table 2.2: SCCT Crisis Response Strategies**

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*Primary crisis response strategies*

Deny crisis response strategies

*Attack the accuser:* The crisis manager confronts the person or group claiming something is wrong with the organisation.

*Denial:* The crisis manager asserts that there is no crisis.

*Scapegoat:* The crisis manager blames some person or group outside of the organisation for the crisis.

Diminish crisis response strategies

*Excuse:* Crisis manager minimizes organisational responsibility by denying intent to harm and or claiming inability to control the crises events

*Justification:* managers minimize the perceived damage caused by the crisis.

Rebuild crisis response strategies

*Compensation:* The crisis manager offers money or other gifts to victims.

*Apology:* The crisis manager indicates the organisation takes full responsibility for the crisis and asks stakeholders for forgiveness.

*Secondary crisis response strategies*

Bolstering crisis response strategies

*Reminder:* Tell stakeholders about the past good works of the organisation.

*Ingratiation:* The crisis manager praises stakeholders and or reminds them of past good works by the organisation.

*Victimage:* Crisis managers remind stakeholders that the organisation is a victim of the crisis too.

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**Source:** Coombs, W. T. (2007). Protecting organisation reputations during a crisis: The development and application of situational crisis communication theory. *Corporate Reputation Review* 10.(3):170.

The SCCT's Deny methods attempt to remove any link between the organisation and the situation (Coombs, 2007). The absence of the crisis connection is justified since the organisation will not be harmed by the crisis if it is not actively involved in it. If stakeholders, “including the news media, on the other hand, accept the no crisis frame of denial, the organisation is spared any reputational harm” (Coombs, 2007: 171). The deny response is, thus, recommended when the organisation is involved in a rumor and is presented with unwarranted challenges (Coombs, 2014; Elmore, 2014). There are three response strategies available to organisational managers when using the denial strategy. These include attacking the accuser, denial, and scapegoat.

Diminish strategies are used to show that the crisis is not as bad as the stakeholders think or to show that the organisation lacked control over the crisis. According to Coombs (2007: 171), “if crisis managers lessen an organisation’s connection to the crisis and or have people view the crisis less negatively, the harmful effects of the crisis are reduced.” The diminish strategies are most effective when they are used to strengthen existing crisis frames. The recommended usage of these strategies involves a) accident crisis situations where there is no prominent history of crisis or poor relationship history and b) victim crisis situations where there is a crisis history and or poor relationship history (Coombs 2014; Elmore, 2014). Excuse and justifications are strategies in this group.

The Rebuild strategies, according to Coombs (2007), are the most common methods for acquiring new reputational assets. They hope to improve the organisation's reputation by providing victims with material and or symbolic assistance. That is, crisis managers can say and do things that benefit stakeholders, thereby preventing the crisis from worsening. Positive reputational actions could include crisis managers offering compensation or tender apologies. The rebuild strategies are “used for crises that present a severe reputational threat...and are very accommodative and seek to improve perceptions of the organisation through compensation and or apologies” (Coombs 2010:41).

Bolstering strategies attempt to contribute positive information about the organisation (reminder) by complimenting others (ingratiation) and or reminding people of the organisation's previous excellent efforts. Bolstering strategies offer a minimal opportunity to develop reputational assets. Managers with positive stakeholder

relationships can use that goodwill to help defend the organisation's brand, praise stakeholders for their efforts throughout the crisis to improve relationships with them, or garner compassion from being a victim of the crisis (Coombs 2007). Using the bolstering strategy, organisations seek to draw on their past good works to counter-balance the current negatives from the crisis. The reminder strategy demands that there are good past works from which to draw. However, Coombs (2006), cited in Coombs (2010) reiterates that reinforcing strategies would seem odd if used alone. "Rather than being a primary strategy, they are best used to support the three primary strategies" (p. 41). Therefore, in line with the SCCT, reinforcing strategies must be used with one of the other three strategies (Lai, 2010).

### **3. A system for matching the crisis situation and crisis response strategies**

Organisations in crisis are expected to use this element to choose crisis response strategies based on their perceived acceptance of responsibility for the crisis (Coombs, 2007). The SCCT links the nature of a crisis to an organisation's response strategy. Coombs and Holladay (2006) conducted an experiment to determine how crisis response tactics differed depending on the nature of crisis. They discovered that matching crisis response tactics to the type of crisis reduced the negative consequences on an organisation's reputation. Table 2.3 shows the crisis strategy guidelines

**Table 2.3: SCCT Crisis Response Strategy Guidelines**

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1. Informing and adjusting information alone can be enough when crises have minimal attributions of crisis responsibility (victim crises), no history of similar crises, and a neutral or positive prior relationship reputation.
  2. Victimage can be used as part of the response for workplace violence, product tampering, natural disasters and rumors.
  3. Diminish crisis response strategies should be used for crises with minimal attributions of crisis responsibility (victim crises) coupled with a history of similar crises and or negative prior relationship reputation.
  4. Diminish crisis response strategies should be used for crises with low attributions of crisis responsibility (accident crises), which have no history of similar crises, and a neutral or positive prior relationship reputation.
  5. Rebuild crisis response strategies should be used for crises with low attributions of crisis responsibility (accident crises), coupled with a history of similar crises and or negative prior relationship reputation.
  6. Rebuild crisis response strategies should be used for crises with strong attributions of crisis responsibility (preventable crises) regardless of crisis history or prior relationship reputation.
  7. The deny posture crisis response strategies should be used for rumor and challenge crises
  8. Maintain consistency in crisis response strategies. Mixing deny crisis response strategies with either the diminish or rebuild strategies will erode the effectiveness of the overall response.
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**Source:** Coombs, W. T. (2007). Protecting organisation reputations during a crisis: The development and application of situational crisis communication theory. *Corporate Reputation Review* 10.(3):173.



### **2.9.1.1 Critique of the SCCT**

The SCCT, which has been described by crisis scholars as the most widely tested theory of crisis communication (Cooley and Cooley, 2011) has been refined and developed into a more comprehensible theory over the years (Kyhn, 2008). The main explanation for the use of the SCCT in crisis discourse is that by adopting strategies that are specifically targeting certain crises, organisations can reduce the publics' negative perceptions of the organisation while increasing positive ones more effectively (Xu and Li, 2013). Communication strategies focus on the reactions of organisations in response to a crisis. However, the SCCT focuses on how these responses can be employed to repair the image and protect the reputation of organisations after a crisis.

One of the SCCT's primary strengths is that it builds on the Image Restoration Theory's flaws and limitations by identifying numerous alternative crisis communication tactics that organisations might apply in certain crisis situations. To put it another way, SCCT matches crisis response techniques to situations and then determines the most effective crisis response strategy for protecting the organisation's reputation. As a result, the SCCT enables crisis managers to comprehend the impact of selecting a non-matching strategy by demonstrating why the response's effectiveness is diminished (Lai 2010). Also, the SCCT integrates strategies into a system and predicts how stakeholders should react to a crisis and crisis communication strategy. That is, it gives insights into the way stakeholders will likely react to the various crisis communication strategies in each crisis to save the reputation of the organisation.

Crises affect multiple stakeholder groups who form various perceptions of the reputation of the organisation. One of the weaknesses of the SCCT is that it overlooks the possible disparities of attributions that may occur within a particular crisis. That is, the SCCT does not acknowledge the fact that different groups of stakeholders might view a crisis differently. The SCCT, therefore, treats stakeholders as one homogenous group. empirical evidence of studies that employed the SCCT confirmed that as stakeholders varied, so also do their opinions and perceptions about organisational crisis and crisis communication strategies vary. For instance, Lee (2004) opined that stakeholders could vary in their opinions that an organisation is accountable for a particular crisis and rather suggests that future studies would have enhanced validity if they included the analysis of stakeholder opinions.

Also, several studies using the rebuild strategies of the SCCT have shown that the rebuild strategies of the SCCT are not always the preferred response. For instance, Stockmyer, 1996; Cohen, 1999 as well as Patel and Reinsch, 2003 as cited in Coombs (2007) noted that the more accommodative the strategy, the more expensive it would be for the organisation. Furthermore, the SCCT has been criticized for its failure to focus more on stakeholders. Xu and Li (2013) opined that stakeholders are simply treated as a negative entity to handle to minimize damage to the organisation, rather than as valuable allies to work together to deal with crises.

Furthermore, another limitation of the SCCT is the challenge of measuring the prior reputation of organisations before a crisis. That is, sometimes, it could be difficult to adequately quantify the prior reputation of an organisation before a crisis as some organisations are not in the spotlight before a crisis. Thus, there might be no need to measure their reputation before a crisis. Also, in a crisis involving multiple stakeholders, the SCCT has been criticized for failing to protect the interests of these multiple stakeholders, as it is designed to protect organisational reputation and interests (Xu and Li, 2013).

Finally, findings from this present study revealed a limitation of the SCCT. There is less mention of crisis instances where organisations must respond to an uncategorized crisis type. In other words, the SCCT focuses on crisis types that are either victim, accidental or preventable types. For cases where organisations are yet to determine the type of crisis, yet, must respond promptly, how or what strategies could be employed in responding to such crisis and managing the reputation? An initial assessment of a crisis may not provide the actual causes or category of the crisis. Best practices in crisis communication suggest that organisations in crisis must respond as soon as possible. How should organisations respond to crisis yet to be categorized into types? What should organisations in cases where they have responded to a wrongly categorized crisis and later found the right crisis category?

### **2.9.1.2 Application of the SCCT to the Study**

The SCCT is a theory that is more focused on how stakeholders respond to a crisis and the best response strategies available to organisations seeking to protect and restore their reputations. The theory is premised on matching crisis responses to the level of

crisis responsibility attributed to each crisis. Crises can be negative events that lead stakeholders to assess crisis responsibility. On one hand, when a crisis is perceived as beyond the control of an organisation or individual, the lower the attribution of crisis responsibility. On the other hand, higher perceptions of control lead to higher attributions of crisis responsibility. When effectively used, the SCCT can assist organisational leaders to reduce the attribution of responsibility for a crisis.

The SCCT has been tested by crisis communication scholars for various crisis types. For instance, Coombs and Holladay (2002) examined how crisis managers can protect reputational assets during and after a crisis thereby testing proponents of the SCCT. Their study was the first in a series designed to test and refine the SCCT. Their findings revealed that the SCCT could be applied to all crisis clusters and not limited to organisation misdeed crisis types alone. Similarly, Kyhn (2008) tested the applicability of the SCCT in complex crises using the Scandinavian Airline grounding of Dash 8-Q400 airplanes. His findings revealed that the organisation did not follow the prescriptions of the SCCT, as it used a combination of strategies. However, despite the mismatched response strategies to the crisis type, the organisation did not suffer noticeable damage to its reputation. This could imply that certain strategies from the SCCT which worked in a certain crisis may not be effective in managing another crisis in an entirely different environment.

Furthermore, Lai (2010) explored the SCCT during an information-breach crisis. Their study focused on the TJX breach of information where more than 45.6 million credit and debit card numbers were stolen. Their findings also confirmed the effectiveness of the SCCT in the crisis case. Besides, Cooley and Cooley (2011) in another study tested the SCCT in financial crisis. Their findings revealed a deeper understanding of matching crisis types with response strategies. According to the SCCT, there are matching response strategies available to crisis managers when managing different types of crises. Additionally, Elmore (2014) tested the SCCT while interrogating an institution's response to a campus racial crisis. The study confirmed the effectiveness of the SCCT as a framework for studying and managing crises of racial abuse. Findings further revealed that the use of SCCT can be successful when enacted correctly.

The SCCT was chosen to drive this study first, because of its suitability in the management of crises. Also, the SCCT was selected because of its suitability in matching crisis response strategies to various crisis types which are aimed at protecting and restoring the reputation of organisations. Findings from this study will have implications for the suitability of the SCCT in crises in Nigeria. Furthermore, because the SCCT has been tested in similar crisis types and response strategy types albeit in Western countries, it will afford the researcher the opportunity of examining similar crisis types in Nigeria and comparatively analyzing findings from this study with those of other countries. This will reveal the effectiveness of the SCCT in similar crisis types in a developing country. Also, the theory will help to determine the reputation-building strategies employed by the organisation in sustaining its reputation seven years after the crisis.

### **2.9.2 The Stakeholder Theory**

The stakeholder theory, developed by Freeman in 1984, examines the relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders in its internal and external environments. The theory is primarily concerned with how groups and individuals (stakeholders) affect the activities of an organisation as well as the managerial actions taken in response to stakeholders' concerns (Freeman, 1984). A stakeholder has been defined as any individual or group of people who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives (Freeman, 1984 cited by Xu and Li, 2013). Stakeholders are primarily divided into primary and secondary (Coombs 2000) and include employees, customers, the government, shareholders, suppliers, investors, creditors, lenders non-profit groups, the community, special interest groups, among many others. Coombs (2000) further classifies primary stakeholders as those who can harm or be harmed by a crisis and are necessary to the survival of the organisation. Examples of primary stakeholders can include, employees (part-time or full-time), customers, suppliers among others. Secondary stakeholders on the other hand, are those influenced by the actions of the organisation. This group includes media, competitors and activist groups.

The Stakeholder Theory conceptualizes and identifies stakeholders as any group involved with the organisation with whom a positive relationship must be maintained to survive a crisis situation (Ulmer and Sellnow 2000). Freeman's (1984) seminal

work on stakeholder theory concluded that because environmental shifts were occurring among internal stakeholders (customers, employees, and suppliers) and external stakeholders (regulatory agencies, competitors, and special-interest groups), organisations needed to “take into account all of those groups and individuals that can affect, or are affected by, the accomplishment of the business enterprise” (Freeman, 1984 cited in Pratt, 2012:14). The crux of the stakeholders’ theory is the belief that stakeholders can be affected by crisis outcomes from the organisation and vice versa.

Stakeholders’ attitudes towards an organisation are either supportive, neutral or opposed. The stakeholder theory’s central premise is that organisations that properly manage their stakeholder relationships will live longer and perform better than those that do not. The theory essentially states that organisations that properly manage their stakeholder relationships would live longer and perform better. Freeman (1984) suggested that stakeholder competencies include committing to monitor stakeholder interests, developing strategies to effectively deal with stakeholders and their concerns, dividing and categorizing interests into manageable segments, and ensuring that organisational functions address stakeholder needs.

The theory further assumes that crisis managers must not consider publics as monolithic. That is, as stakeholder groups differ, so also do their opinions, perceptions, and interests. Avery and Lariscy (2010), reiterate that crisis managers should be aware that not only do stakeholders differ but that even within the same stakeholder group, members will respond differently to a crisis. Therefore, crisis managers must consider stakeholder peculiarities in varying situations in the life cycle of an organisation. This is because adopting or disregarding stakeholders before, during, and after crises can either facilitate recovery or worsen the crisis.

### **2.9.2.1 Critique of the Stakeholder Theory**

The Stakeholder Theory, as earlier noted, is useful in determining the interactions and interests between an organisation and its stakeholders, and how these interests can affect the relationships between both parties. The Stakeholder Theory has been frequently recommended as a useful perspective to study crisis communication (Patterson and Allen, 1997; Ulmer 2001; Meer et al. 2016). The relationship between an organisation and its diverse stakeholder groups can enable communication

practitioners to place stakeholders at the center of strategic thinking, to assign ranks to the various stakeholder groups, and to have a relational view of stakeholders. In other words, the Stakeholder Theory allows communication managers to understand their stakeholders - who can affect the operations of the organisation – and thereby assign ranks to each stakeholder group, possibly in order of their influence in the organisation.

The Stakeholder Theory focuses on stakeholders and their capabilities at each crisis stage. It sees both the organisation and stakeholders as valuable allies who must work together to deal with the crisis (Xu and Li, 2013). This is contrary to the SCCT which is more concerned with approaches in dealing with organisational reputations and interests rather than the interests of stakeholders. That is, both the Image Repair and SCCT focus on the application of communication strategies in dealing with stakeholders to minimise harm and protect the reputation of the organisation.

Adopting the Stakeholder Theory in the context of crisis communication can encourage organisations to engage in more proactive and or accommodating crisis management behavior, allowing them to avoid crisis escalation and recover more quickly (Alpaslan, Green and Mitroff, 2009, cited in Meer et al, 2017). This is because an organisation's relationship with its stakeholders can help to shape perceptions of the crisis as well as the reputation of the organisation.

Also, good stakeholder relationships can advance a collective sense-making process between an organisation and its stakeholders when faced with a crisis (Coombs and Holladay, 2001). These relationships can, during crises, aid a better understanding of the crisis. David (2011), cited in Meer et al. (2017), adds that the collective understanding between an organisation and its stakeholders will help to minimize confusion, panic as well as reputational damage for the organisation.

Despite the advantages of the Stakeholder Theory, it has been criticized for some of its shortcomings. Although the theory recognises and acknowledges the interests of stakeholders, it, however, has been criticized for its inability to determine how the interests of the various stakeholders can be met, especially during a crisis. As Argenti, cited in Ambler and Wilson (1995) observed, organisations that try to be all things to all people or to benefit stakeholders are not only at a huge competitive disadvantage, but they are also literally unmanageable. The above assertion is largely true because it

is almost impossible to satisfy the diverse needs of diverse stakeholder groups. Interestingly, there could be a further crisis when the interest of one stakeholder group is met or favoured over another.

The varying incompatible and competing interests and opinions of the different stakeholder groups, often, will mean that there will be no shared common commercial purpose (Ambler and Wilson, 1995). While some stakeholder groups may want the organisation to grow, some may want the organisation to maintain its present size. In contrast, other groups may want the organisation to be taken over for various reasons. Some other groups may even plot the failure or even extinction of the organisation.

In addition, the Stakeholder Theory offers no decision-making criteria to guide corporate governance adequately (King, 2016). That is, the theory offers no guidelines or hierarchy of stakeholders that will guide organisations in their decision-making process. A stakeholder group may feel more superior to another group, especially in the decision-making process, which could lead to a crisis for the organisation.

Also, and most important is the inability to differentiate or distinguish between stakeholder groups (Kelly, 2014). Stakeholders are not only groups affected by organisational activities, but also groups that can largely affect the operations of an organisation. To this effect, can terrorist organisations be regarded as stakeholder groups, since their activities can affect the operation of an organisation? The distinction between stakeholder groups, therefore, must be clearly articulated. Finally, because stakeholder groups differ, it becomes almost impossible to generalize their reactions and perceptions across board, even within the same industry.

### **2.9.2.2 Application of the Stakeholder Theory to the Study**

Stakeholders are important members of an organisation and must always be put into consideration if the organisation is to be successful. Different stakeholder groups have specific expectations from the organisation and vice versa. Reputations are formed, over time, based on the relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders and how well both parties are meeting each other's expectations. A crisis can have a direct impact on stakeholders' perception of an organisation's reputation (Coombs and Holladay, 2007). A crisis is said to occur when stakeholders perceive that there is a crisis. This stems from Coombs (2009) cited by Heath (2010:100) definition of a crisis

as “the perception of an event that threatens expectancies of stakeholders...if stakeholders believe there is a crisis, the organisation is in a crisis unless it can successfully persuade stakeholders it is not.” This further underscores the importance of stakeholders in an organisation. It reveals that stakeholders determine when there is a crisis or not. A crisis that is not well managed can lead to a negative organisational reputation. Therefore, the effective use of crisis communication strategies can modify negative perceptions and frame positive ones in the different stakeholders’ minds.

According to studies, a positive organisation's reputation with stakeholders can be stored as reputational capital over time, indicating the strength of the organisation's relationship with its stakeholders. According to Coombs (2007), an organisation with a big quantity of reputational capital will have reserves in a crisis, and built-up reputational capital operates as an insurance policy when a crisis comes (Fombrun, Gardberg ad Sever, 2000). On the contrary, however, negative organisational reputations are also stored up as reputational capital, indicating the weakness of the organisation’s relationship with its stakeholders, which will also show up when a crisis occurs. Also, when crises occur, stakeholders seek explanations and attribute blame to the organisation. Stephens et al. (2005) argue that stakeholders attribute significantly greater crisis responsibility to human-error crises than to technical-error crises. Also, the more blame attributed to a crisis, the greater the damage to the organisational reputation. A favorable reputation enables an organisation to get the benefit of the doubt from stakeholders during a crisis (Stephens et al., 2005).

The Stakeholder Theory will assist this study to determine the various stakeholder groups of Dana Air. Information about the stakeholder groups assisted the researcher in the selection of a critical group to be sampled. A pre-crisis relationship between Dana Air and the passengers would determine how the passengers would perceive the reputation of Dana Air seven years after the plane crash. Also, the theory will assist the study to determine the attributions of responsibility that these stakeholders held following the crisis.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Chapter Overview**

The methodologies used in this study are discussed in this chapter. The research design, study population, sampling procedures and size, research instruments, and validity and reliability were all reviewed. This chapter further examined the various data collection methods, data analysis methods and further discussed the ethical considerations that guided this research. The limitations that were encountered in this study were also discussed.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study investigated the crisis response strategies employed by Dana Air in response to the 2012 plane crash, where all 153 passengers died, with several injured persons, and destroyed properties worth millions of Naira. It further examined the stakeholders' current perception of the reputation of Dana Air seven years after the crash. The achievement of this case study's objectives lay in an in-depth understanding of the crisis and the crisis communication strategies employed by Dana Air, which were retrieved from an analysis of relevant documents and the opinions from key stakeholders. Thus, the qualitative research approach became relevant. The qualitative approach brings the researcher closer to the subjects, thereby allowing for an in-depth understanding of the words, and cues from the documents and participants (Bryman and Teevan, 2015). In addition, the study adopted the quantitative approach to further understand passenger perceptions of Dana Air reputation. Therefore, the study employed the mixed methods approach of both qualitative and quantitative data.

The mixed-methods approach refers to collecting, analyzing, and interpretation of both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study. Thus, the study employed the exploratory sequential design to gather the mixed methods data. The exploratory

sequential design implied that data was gathered sequentially. That is, qualitative data was first generated and analysed before quantitative data were collected and analysed. Qualitative data (QUAL) was the dominant data, while quantitative data (quan) was gathered to complement the qualitative data.

The dominant focus on qualitative data was to enable the researcher to deeply explore and analyse the crisis communication strategies employed by Dana Air. The qualitative approach presented the researcher with the opportunity of getting closer to the data by independently analyzing the content of the research subjects without interference from the organisation being researched. Therefore, content analysis and key informant interviews were employed in gathering qualitative data, while a survey through a structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data that examined stakeholders' perceptions of Dana Air.

The mixed-methods exploratory sequential approach was preferred as it helped the researcher first gather qualitative data sequentially through content analysis before key informant interviews. The findings from the qualitative data further assisted in crafting some of the survey items for quantitative data.

### **3.1.1 The Three Phases of Research Methods**

The study employed a single case study research method to understand the response strategies employed in managing crisis. Single case study designs allow researchers to holistically examine and deeply investigate a series of real issues over time by focusing on events that occurred in real contexts. Researchers investigate such phenomena by exploring the relationships and connections between events by employing multiple data gathering sources. Stacks, cited in Lai (2010), and Holladay (2010), argued that one advantage of the single case study methods in research is that because the phenomenon under study has already occurred, researchers can use current pieces of evidence to investigate, understand, analyze, explain and attempt answers on reasons that led to the case(s). Therefore, to understand the Dana Air crisis case, this study adopted three research methods: Key Informant Interviews (KII), qualitative content analysis and survey. Thus, the data from the three methods were gathered in sequences.

### **3.1.1.1 Key Informant Interviews**

The first phase involved gathering qualitative data through Key Informant Interviews (KII's). KII's are comprehensive interviews conducted with critical members of a unit or team. The UCLA Centre for Health Policy Research notes that KII's are conducted to obtain information about salient issues within a community from a limited number of well-connected and informed experts. Thus, the aim is to gather as much necessary information as possible from a wide range of purposively selected experts such as professionals, community leaders, or residents with first-hand knowledge/information about the subject matter. For this study, KII's were conducted only with four (4) media experts, two (2) members from the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), the spokesperson of the Accident and Investigation Bureau (AIB), a former staff of Dana Air, and two (2) willing members of the crisis management team. Thus, the findings of the KIIs complemented the content analysed data to have a holistic view of the strategies employed in responding to the crisis.

### **3.1.1.2 Qualitative Content Analysis**

While the KII was ongoing, the study also gathered qualitative data through a content analysis of relevant documents. As earlier stated, content analysis allows for accurate data collection without interference from the subjects being researched. Hence, content analyzed data was gathered to examine and understand the crisis strategies employed by Dana Air before deducing the SCCT strategies evident in the organisation's response. In this study, content analyzed data were mainly secondary data gathered through press releases, media statements, videos of press conferences, official reports on the plane crash, and Guardian and Punch newspaper reports.

### **3.1.1.3 Survey**

The final phase of data gathering involved quantitative data (survey) gathered through an online questionnaire. Quantitative data was gathered to understand stakeholders' perception of Dana Air's reputation. As literature in Chapter two revealed, successful crisis management goes beyond sending out messages alone to stakeholders. It also involves understanding how the stakeholders perceived a crisis and its reputation after the crisis. Thus, organisations can have a favourable and unfavourable perception of reputation from stakeholders. Therefore, beyond the crisis response strategies, which

are public relations functions employed by Dana Air, there was a need to examine the stakeholders' perception about its reputation. Thus, survey was employed to gather passengers' opinions about the reputation of Dana Air using parameters such as quality of service, effective communication, customer satisfaction, emotional appeal, innovativeness, corporate social responsibility, and quality of management.

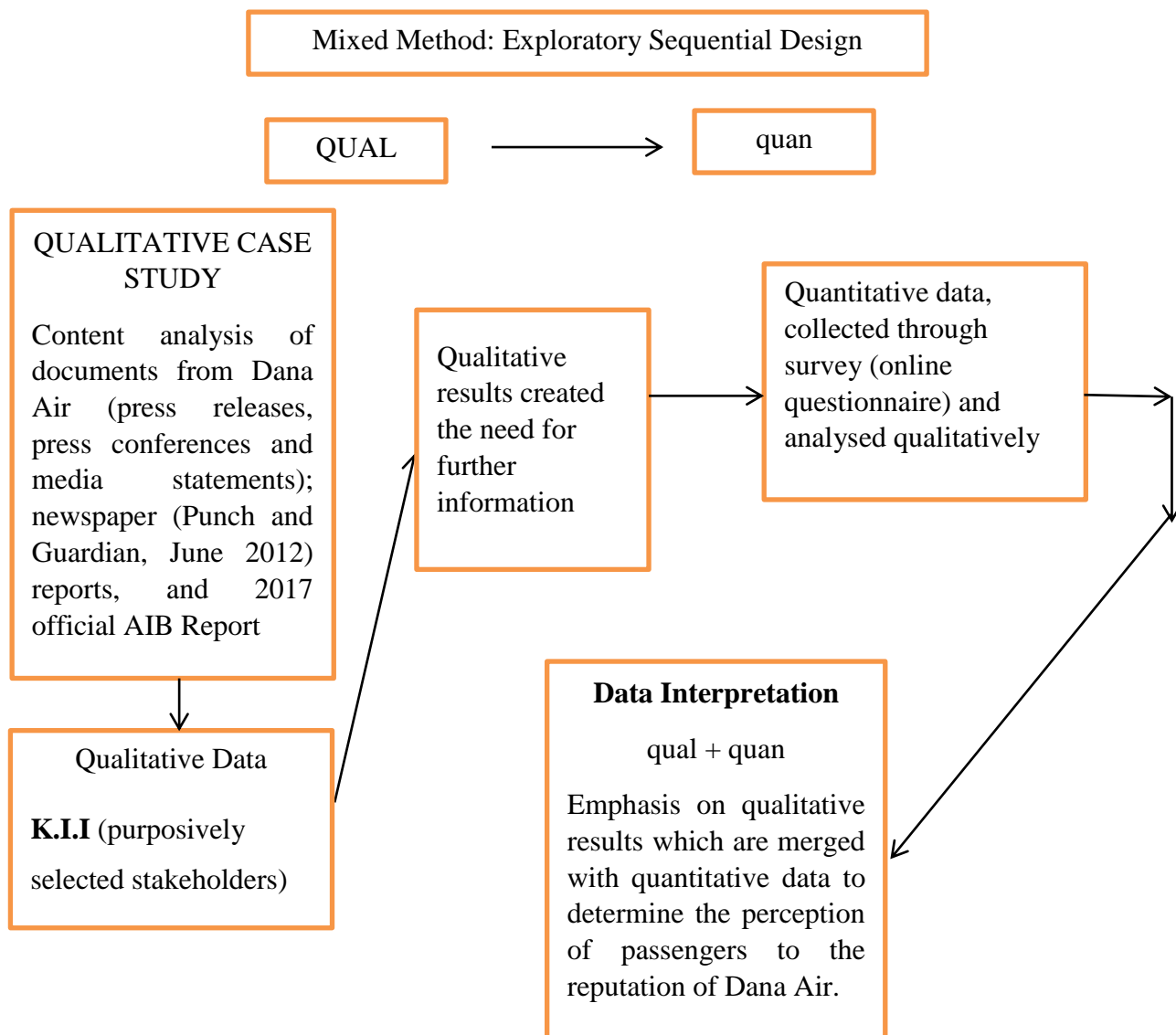
It is interesting to note that case studies employing mixed-method approaches are dominant methods in crisis communication research (An and Cheng, 2010; Adebayo, 2017; Nwogwugwu, 2018). Specifically, An and Cheng (2010), whose research tracked crisis communication research trends in public relations journals, found many case studies that employed qualitative content analysis and in-depth interviews. They opined that case studies offered more direct and convenient approaches to investigating crisis contexts because crises mainly depend on many situational factors. However, Nwogwugwu (2018) found experiments (38%) and case study methods (34.4%) employing qualitative content analysis approaches as more dominant in crisis communication research.

In employing these methods, this study provided answers to the following research questions:

1. To what extent did Dana Air employ crisis communication strategies in dealing with the 2012 plane crash crisis?
2. Which of the Dana Air crisis communication strategies were most effective?
3. To what extent did Dana Air crisis communication strategies correlate with the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) recommendations?
4. What strategies did Dana Air employ in rebuilding its relationship with stakeholders after the crisis?
5. How did the crisis communication strategies influence stakeholder perceptions of Dana Air reputation?

It is necessary to reiterate that the researcher considered that data for this study was gathered seven years after the plane crash. Therefore, it was assumed that some stakeholders might have an almost faded memory of the incident. However, the choice of the selected stakeholder groups was strategic and purposive as the researcher wanted respondents who were not direct victims or families of the plane crash victims as the study was not meant to bring back memories of the incident. For qualitative data

respondents, the researcher sought those with documented records of the strategies employed to manage the plane crash's aftermath. Nonetheless, it became one of the motivations for embarking on the study as, before now, there was a dearth in Nigerian scholarly works that examined crisis communication strategies and stakeholders' perceptions of organisational reputation. Hence, as earlier noted, this study is geared towards the commencement of a series of scholarly documentation on crisis communication-related studies in Nigeria. Figure 3.1 provides an overview of the research methods adopted for this study.



**Figure 3.1: Summary of Research Methodology**

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2020**

### **3.2 Study Area and Study Population**

Dana Airlines is a fully private sector-owned carrier operating in Nigeria which commenced operations in November 2008. Dana Air draws leisure and business travelers from both within and outside Nigeria, as their target market comprises those looking for safe, high-quality, and reasonably priced air travel. As earlier noted, the Dana Air crisis case occurred after the Boeing MD-83 plane crash on 3rd June, 2012 in Iju Ishaga, Lagos State.

The population for this study comprised human and content materials that were deemed relevant in investigating the 2012 Dana Air plane crash. These content materials (documents) included official press releases from Dana Air, videos of press conferences that addressed the issues around the plane crash, media statements released by Dana Air, Guardian and Punch June 2012 newspaper reports, other relevant company documents, and official reports from the Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB) and Aviation Consulting Group (a private investigation into the 2012 Dana Air crash). The human population comprised Aviation media experts, members from the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), Accident and Investigation Bureau (AIB), and crisis management team members. These persons were selected because they possessed adequate knowledge about the crisis response strategies and its execution after the 2012 Dana MD-83 airline crash.

### **3.3 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size**

The sampling procedure discusses the processes of selecting respondents from a sample which should be representative. Thus, Okoro (2001) explained that sampling technique is the process of choosing from a portion of a population of study to represent the entire population. The trends in crisis communication research methodologies revealed that the purposive sampling technique was the most widely employed (An and Cheng, 2010; Nwogwugwu, 2018). Hence, the purposive and convenience sampling techniques were adopted for this study. On the one hand, purposive sampling techniques are employed by researchers on respondents who possess relevant characteristics and qualities that are necessary for responding to questions or enquiries needed for the study. Thus, according to Wilson, Esiri and Onwubere (2008:154), the basic assumption in employing purposive sampling is that "with good judgment and appropriate strategy, the researcher can select cases to be

included in the sample and thus arrive at samples that meet one's needs." Therefore, the purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting the case study, key informant interviewees, and survey respondents.

On the other hand, the convenience or available sampling techniques are employed by researchers on respondents who are willing and available to participate in the study. Thus, participation by respondents in this study was voluntary as their consent to participate was first sought after being made aware of the objectives of the study.

### **3.3.1 Sampling Technique for Case Study**

The purposive sampling technique guided the selection of the single case to be studied. The single case study was chosen because it allowed a more profound and narrow investigation of one particular instance (Radtke, 2011). The inclusion criterion for the selected crisis was an organisational crisis with specific crisis characteristics, such as peculiarity of the crisis (one that was not too common), its significant disruption to the organisation and environment, wide media coverage with interests from various stakeholders, as well as perceived reputational loss. Also, the applicability of the SCCT (an already tested evidence-based theory on crisis response strategies) to various crisis types was further examined as the findings from this Nigerian crisis case have contributed to the development of the theory. The crisis case was further selected because the organisation, unlike other airline organisations that experienced the same crisis type, still exists and is seemingly stronger. Recent evidence shows that Dana Air had bagged several Nigerian aviation industry awards.

### **3.3.2 Sampling Techniques for Qualitative Content Analysis**

The purposive sampling technique provided a platform for a holistic review of messages used in managing the crisis and the public. As earlier stated, qualitative content analyses are the dominant methods in crisis communication research. The researcher argued that qualitative content analyses follow a procedure that could be replicated repeatedly. The replication allows for the validity and reliability criteria of the study as the procedure, when replicated by different researchers using the same parameters and techniques, will have almost similar results.

Also, press releases, press conferences, and media statements from Dana Air were purposively selected because they were the official means of communication that emanated from Dana Air in response to the crisis. Thus, all press releases, press



conferences, and media statements released within the month of June were analyzed. The purposive sampling technique also guided the Final Report of investigations into the plane crash released by the AIB in 2017. The Report was examined and selected because it gave concrete and detailed information about the plane crash and its causes. Also, the AIB is the official investigative body set up by the Federal Government of Nigeria to investigate, among other things, plane crashes within the country and make recommendations to the government based on its findings. Also, Baron's (2017) Report was also selected because it was a private international investigation into the Dana Air plane crash, which has been published online. This report is assumed to be unbiased without influence from either the government or officials of the Airline.

In addition, the purposive sampling technique assisted in selecting the newspapers for analysis. Through an initial pilot test by the researcher, the Guardian and Punch newspapers devoted more attention to aviation news than other newspapers at that time. Specifically, the Guardian and Punch newspapers extensively reported on the Dana Air plane crash incident in 2012 with exclusive and first-hand news reports. In addition, the Guardian and Punch newspapers were purposively selected based on their wide national circulation, coverage and readership. Also in 2011 (a year before the plane crash), the Guardian and Punch newspapers were ranked among the top 3 daily read Nigerian national newspapers (mediaReach OMD, 2011).

Furthermore, the Guardian and Punch newspapers also boast of records showing the independent nature of the newspapers in their news coverage, news analysis, and editorial opinions (ABC, 2005, cited in Alao and Olarinmoye, 2007). The selected newspaper reports were collected for thirty (30) days - within the month of the plane crash. The articles were selected based on their relevance to the study. Thus, to be considered relevant, the news reports had to contain information or statements from either the stakeholders or spokespersons or Dana Air (management) officials regarding the crash.

### **3.3.3 Sampling Techniques for Key Informant Interviewees**

The purposive sampling technique assisted in choosing respondents for the key informant interview. Key informant interviews were conducted with the following primary stakeholders, who were purposively selected based on their knowledge and expertise on aviation matters: spokespersons of the Federal Airports Authority of

Nigeria, the spokesperson of the Accident Investigation Bureau, former members of the external public relations agency and the aviation editors of four newspapers who covered the incident of the crash. The choice of these individuals was informed by the belief that they possessed first-hand information about the crisis and strategies used in responding to the crisis.

#### **3.3.4 Sampling Technique for Survey Respondents**

The purposive and convenience sampling techniques guided the choice of respondents for the survey. Respondents were first purposively selected as they must have flown with Dana Air after their operating license was restored after the crash. The passengers are believed to have formed perceptions about Dana Air.

In addition, the convenience sampling technique was employed to select respondents who were available and willing to participate in the online survey. In seeking their willingness, respondents were first informed about the study's objectives and were guaranteed privacy and confidentiality of information provided. Next, these respondents were then required to give their consent to participate by proceeding to complete the survey willingly.

#### **3.3.5 Sample Size**

As Wimmer and Dominick (2011:102) posited, there is "no single sample size formula or method available for every research or statistical procedure." However, specific guidelines are given in determining a sample size, one of which includes using "available information in published research" (p. 104). In addition, Adebayo (2017) observed that small purposeful sample sizes are employed for case study crisis cases. Therefore, the availability of information needed to answer the questions would form the size. Thus, the sampling size for this study comprised all the official information from Dana Air in June 2012, through press releases (3), videos of relevant press conferences (3) and media statements (16), AIB's final report on the plane crash (1). For news articles from Punch and Guardian newspapers published from June 4, 2012, – June 30, 2012, a total of eighty-three (83) news reports were retrieved. However, only thirty-six (36) (Punch = 14 and Guardian = 22) news reports were suitable for analysis. Also, four (4) key informants provided information for the study, while forty-two (42) willing respondents (passengers of Dana Air) participated in the survey.

### **3.4 Methods of Data Collection**

The data for this study was obtained through coding sheets (for content analysis), key informant interview guides (for the key informant interviews) and a structured online questionnaire (for survey). Data was collected in sequences.

#### **3.4.1 Qualitative Content Analysis**

Qualitative content analysed data was first gathered through official statements from Dana Air through press releases, press conferences, media statements, and news reports. In addition, content analysed materials were retrieved from news articles from The Guardian and Punch newspapers (June 2012) after the plane crash. Also, the final official Report on the crisis released by the Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB) and another report by the Aviation Consulting Group formed data for the study. The content from these articles and reports were collected and qualitatively analysed.

#### **3.4.2 Key Informant Interview**

While the qualitative content analysis was ongoing, the researcher collected qualitative data from key informant interviews among informants who possessed first-hand information about the crisis. Key informants comprised Aviation newspaper editors and members of the crisis team that managed the crisis.

#### **3.4.3 Survey**

The quantitative (survey) data was gathered through an online questionnaire. The online questionnaire was personally administered through Google forms by the researcher after explaining the purpose of the survey to respondents. The links to the online questionnaire were sent to respondents who were contacted through the social media pages (Facebook and Twitter) of Dana Air and other referred respondents.

#### **3.4.4 Research Instruments**

Three research instruments - a coding sheet, key informant interview guide, and an online questionnaire - were developed for this study. They are further explained in the next section:

##### **3.4.4.1 Coding Sheet**

The coding sheet (see Appendix C) contained content categories which coded for the *type of crisis* (victim, accidental, preventable, both accidental and preventable or no mention of crisis type); *crisis history* (reference to previous accident and type or

reference to any other previous accident); and attributions of crisis responsibility (either accident under investigation, blaming the organisation, blaming circumstances, blaming both the organisation and circumstance or other types of blame). Furthermore, the content categories for the crisis response strategies were informed by those outlined by the SCCT. These include, deny crisis response strategies (attack the accuser, denial, and scapegoat); diminish crisis response strategies (excuse, justification); rebuild crisis response strategies (compensation, apology) and the Bolstering crisis response strategies (reminder, ingratiation, and victimage). In addition, the coding sheet coded for the mention of other crisis response strategies not mentioned by the SCCT.

### **Units of Analysis**

The unit of analysis for this study consisted of simple phrases or sentences of communication messages from official statements from Dana Air. These included phrases or sentences contained in each press release, press conference, and media statement released to the public

#### **3.4.4.2 Key Informant Interview Guide**

Two sets of key informant interview guides – one for the Newspaper Aviation Editors and the other for members of the AIB, FAAN and crisis management team – were developed to direct the conduct of the interviews (See Appendix A and B). The guide contained questions about the opinions of the participants to the crisis, the strategies employed in the management of the crisis, their opinions on the effectiveness of the crisis communication strategies, and their perceptions of the impact of the crisis on the reputation of Dana Air.

#### **3.4.4.3 Questionnaire**

An (online) questionnaire (See Appendix D) was also developed and administered to the respondents. The questionnaire examined stakeholders' (passengers) perceptions of Dana Air reputation. After the respondents voluntarily volunteered to participate in the study, they were further required to consent to participate. They were informed of the study's objectives, assured of privacy and confidentiality of their details and information provided and further briefed that there were no known risks or potential harm. Female respondents were highly encouraged to participate. They were not required to include their names nor location.

As earlier stated in Chapter Two, the reputation indices were divided into financial and social factors. However, for this study, respondents were required to respond to the social factors of Dana Air's reputation. The online questionnaire consisted of thirty-five (35) items divided into seven (7) reputational factors which contained clearly defined mutually exclusive and exhaustive content categories. Respondents were required to tick their most preferred options on a 5-point Likert scale - Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), and Undecided (U) on the following reputational indices: quality of service (5 items); effective communication (5 items); customer satisfaction (2 items); emotional appeal (8 items); innovativeness (2 items); corporate social responsibility (3 items) and quality of management (3 items). Finally, respondents responded to general reputational statements (4 items) and two (2) open-ended questions where they were at liberty to express their opinions.

#### **3.4.5 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments**

The acceptability and quality of research findings are centered around researchers' ability to establish their instruments' validity and reliability for the study. Validity is the degree to which an instrument measures what it is expected to measure. Reliability refers to the consistency of a research instrument when similar studies are replicated using similar procedures. According to Ojebode, Onekutu and Adegbola (2010), the validity and reliability of research instruments help to offer confidence to the research results and make the conclusions worth believing. However, to enhance the validity and reliability of research instruments and findings for this study, the questionnaire's validity (face and content) was carried out. For the face validity, the researcher's supervisor guided the content of the instruments, while for the content validity, a pilot test was conducted to test the questionnaire content. The missing items from the content validity from the pilot test were incorporated into the main study.

In addition, four other aspects were taken into consideration. These are issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, which according to Bryman and Teevan (2005), could replace the validity and reliability of instruments. Credibility deals with how consistent the research findings are with reality. The credibility criterion informed the choice of the two national newspapers to diminish any form of biased reportage. The credibility of this study also informed the

triangulation of data strategies where different sources were not done in isolation but informed by the understanding of existing evidence-based literature.

Transferability refers to how the qualitative research results can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings. Hence, to make findings from this study transferable, the study provides a realistic description of the case under study. Dependability is concerned with whether the findings from the study can be the same if the study is replicated. Dependability was achieved by using clearly defined and mutually exclusive, and exhaustive content categories and units of analysis. However, it is essential to note that the same crisis in different contexts/countries may yield different results. Confirmability refers to the degree to which the research results could be further confirmed or corroborated by others. For this study, relevant data gathering procedures and materials are presented as an appendix at the end of this study. Thus, the entire process of data gathered, data processing, and interpretation are laid out to ensure the study's trustworthiness.

#### **3.4.6 Pilot Test**

The researcher conducted a pilot test to examine respondents' opinions of an airline's reputation. The pilot test was conducted as a validity and reliability criterion for this study. To achieve this, a small sample of 20 respondents, employing the convenience sampling technique, was conducted on passengers at the Ibadan Airport. Fourteen (14) copies of the structured questionnaire were returned. The respondents were required to rate the airline (Overland Airways) on a 3 point scale of high, medium, and low based on the following reputation quotients: innovativeness, quality of services, and information about the organisation's corporate social responsibility. The findings from the pilot test revealed that respondents rated the quality of services above other reputation quotients. However, one key indicator which was not included in the survey was the risks and safety of passengers. Through the open-ended questionnaire item, the respondents identified risk and safety as crucial indicators of reputational measurement. The respondents opined that they would rate any airline higher that would always guarantee their safety at all times. The safety and risk indicator further helped the researcher to include it as part of the main study. Table 3.1 presents a summary of the research questions, corresponding methods, and instruments:

**Table 3.1: Summary of Research Questions, Research Methods and Instruments**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Research Methods</b>	<b>Instruments</b>
1.	To what extent did Dana Air employ crisis communication strategies in dealing with the 2012 plane crash crisis?	Content analysis and key informant interviews	Coding sheet and key informant interview guide
2.	Which of the Dana Air crisis communication strategies were most effective?	Content analysis and key informant interviews	Coding sheet and key informant interview guide
3.	To what extent did Dana Air's crisis communication strategies correlate with the recommendations of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)?	Content analysis	Coding sheet
4.	What strategies did Dana Air employ in rebuilding its relationship with stakeholders after the crisis?	Content analysis and key informant interview	Coding sheet and key informant interview guide
5.	How did the crisis communication strategies influence stakeholder perceptions of Dana Air's reputation?	Key informant interviews and Survey	Key informant interview guide and online questionnaire

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2020**

### **3.4.7 Procedures and Inclusion Criterion**

The entire data gathered for the study was conducted personally by the researcher. For the content analysis, the retrieved documents were those released by Dana Air from June 4 – 30, 2012 – the period of the crash - and September 2012, when the Federal Government of Nigeria, through an announcement, lifted the ban on their operations. Also, the Guardian and Punch newspapers were selected as they devoted more attention to aviation news than any other newspaper in Nigeria at that time. The Guardian and Punch newspaper reports were retrieved from June 4, 2012, a day after the plane crash occurred, until June 30, 2012, to signify the first month of the incident. In addition, for a news report to be a criteria for inclusion, such news reports had to be published within June 3 – 30, 2012 and September 2012 - the period of the crash and when the Nigerian government lifted the ban on Dana Air's operating license. The retrieved data were collected and analysed within a period of 6 months (November 2019 – April, 2020).

While the content analysis was ongoing, key informant interviews were also personally conducted with the purposively selected key informants. The key informant interview guide was employed to direct the interview sessions. The KII's were conducted within three (3) months after the participants indicated willingness to participate. The KII guide was first sent to the informants online (Email) and some typed and sent in their responses while phone interviews were conducted with the others. It was difficult to meet with these interviewees personally as the coronavirus pandemic was at its peak in the country – and the world – at large. Hence, we resorted to phone and email interviews.

Finally, the respondents for the survey were solicited personally by the researcher. Referrals were received from those who had flown with Dana Air. Also, the researcher personally went through the social media (Facebook and Twitter) handles of those who commented or reacted to posts from Dana Air on social media. Private messages were sent to these persons to indicate if they had flown with Dana Air before after which the study's objectives were provided. However, many were unwilling to participate in the survey. However, the link to the online survey was sent out to those who indicated interest to participate. After four months of data gathering, a total of forty-two (42) respondents participated in the survey.



### **3.5 Methods of Data Analysis**

The study adopted theme building, descriptive and inferential data analysis methods for the qualitative and quantitative data. The data from the content analysis were analysed using theme building and descriptive statistics. Emphasis was placed on recurring themes, phrases, and quotes from interviews and documents. The data from the key informant interview was also qualitatively interpreted using emerging themes. The analysis included specific excerpts that will help to develop and support identified themes. Quantitative data was analysed using frequency counts and percentages.

The content analysis generated data was analysed using theme building and descriptive statistics. Emphasis was placed on recurring themes, phrases, and quotes from retrieved documents and interviews. Also, quantitative data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. Further inferences were made based on the qualitative and quantitative data findings.

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

Due to the sensitive nature of crisis studies, especially following plane crash with recorded deaths, it becomes evident to consider ethical issues associated with this type of research. It is necessary to consider ethical issues in crisis studies when lives are lost, and property worth millions in value are destroyed. Hence, the researcher sought ethical approval from the University of Ibadan Social Science and Humanities Research Ethics Committee (SSHREC).

A major ethical challenge that respondents could have encountered during the online survey was that they could recall the tragic event and get emotional in responding. However, in taking care of this challenge, the survey instrument (online questionnaire) did not mention anything related to the plane crash. Instead, since the study sought to examine respondents' perceptions about the reputation of Dana Air, the instrument solely focused on the reputation indicators and inferred statements from the content analysis. The perceptions of the reputation of Dana Air revealed the effectiveness of the communication strategies employed by Dana Air seven years after the plane crash in 2012. In addition, participation was voluntary after all respondents were fully informed about the study's objectives.

Furthermore, due to the sensitivity of the crisis issue, the researcher envisaged that key-informant interviewees, especially current Dana Airline staff, may not be willing to give information about the issue. This assumption proved correct as the few staff members contacted declined to provide information about the crisis. Therefore, they were excluded from the interview because they did not consent to provide information. Hence, participation was voluntary. Given the above, the researcher ensured that the following ethical considerations were put in place:

**Voluntariness** - The study adopted the convenience sampling technique to select research participants. Participants included those willing and available, briefed on the research purpose, and consented to participate. Hence, participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. Because the survey was conducted online, a section of the introduction (instructions) of the online questionnaire required the respondents to *tick* their approval to participate in the survey. Also, research participants were not required to include their names. Their consent was sought where names were provided, while confidentiality of information was also guaranteed.

**Confidentiality of data** – strategies employed in managing the crisis (press and news releases, available Reports, newspaper reports) are already in the public domain. However, private data and identities of respondents would be guaranteed and protected where necessary. Participants were also assured of strict confidentiality by not revealing their details during the interview sessions.

**Beneficence and non-maleficence to participants** – There were no risks in participating in this study at the time of conducting the study. The online questionnaire did not ask questions relating to the plane crash. The Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) also focused on questions relating to strategies employed in responding to the crisis. The researcher explained the social value of the research to the interviewees before each data was gathered.

**Gender considerations** - Opportunity was provided for the equal representation of the male and female gender. Females were encouraged to respond to the survey. Hence, there were twenty-two (22) male participants and twenty (20) female participants.

**Translation of protocol to local language** – It was assumed that respondents for this study were knowledgeable and proficient in English. Hence, the instruments were

structured in the English language. However, provision was made to translate the questionnaire into local languages for respondents who may not be fluent in English. Nonetheless, respondents understood the English language and communicated in it.

### **3.7 Limitations of the Study**

The study is limited by various shortcomings associated with qualitative and case study research methods. These include issues of generalisation and representativeness. In other words, for a variety of reasons, the findings of this study cannot be applied to other similar crises. Each crisis is unique and focuses on an in-depth analysis of a single crisis. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised. Secondly, the strategies employed when dealing with crises differ from one case to another, even within similar crises. Thirdly, stakeholder reactions or perceptions will vary because organisations have different stakeholder groups, translating to diverse responses to crises. Therefore, the findings from this study cannot be generalised for similar crises.

Another major constraint to conducting this study was the non-availability of adequate crisis information from the current official website of Dana Air and limited information about the crisis on their social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter). These limitations meant that many of the content analysed materials (press releases and media statements) were sourced from an online web archive ([www.web.archive.org](http://www.web.archive.org)), the external communication team, and also from the newspaper (Punch and Guardian, June 2012) report.

Furthermore, the inability and unwillingness of some important Key Informant Interviewees (KIIs) to provide deeper insights into the crisis for reasons best known to them was a significant limitation to the study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.0. Chapter Overview**

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of research findings from the primary and secondary data sources gathered for the study. The study examined the crisis communication (response) strategies employed by Dana Air in responding to the 3rd June 2012 Boeing MD-83 plane crash. It further investigated how the crisis communication strategies influenced stakeholders' perception of Dana Air. Examining stakeholders' perception of Dana Air's reputation was necessary as studies have revealed that the proper use of crisis response strategies after a crisis led to positive stakeholders' perception of organisational reputation. Thus, the analysis of this chapter is divided into two sections: Section A provided analyses of the research questions that guided this study, while section B presented an in-depth discussion of the finding from the qualitative and quantitative data.

#### **4.1 SECTION A: Analyses of Research Questions**

This section presents the analyses of the research questions generated for this study. As discussed in chapter one, five research questions were raised.

##### **4.1.1 Research Question One: To what extent did Dana Air employ crisis communication strategies in dealing with the 2012 plane crash crisis?**

Research question one sought to investigate the communication (response) strategies employed by Dana Air in response to the 3rd June 2012 plane crash. An examination of the response strategies provided insights into and assisted in understanding the crisis response strategies employed by Dana Air. Findings of research question one provided further information into the communication strategies of a Nigerian crisis case. Therefore, in answering this research question, the researcher conducted key informant

interviews with relevant stakeholders, including representatives of the media, the Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), and the Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB). Also, the researcher analysed the content of relevant documents retrieved from the crisis management team, an online web archive ([www.web.archive.org](http://www.web.archive.org)), and relevant newspaper reports to extract the crisis response strategies employed by Dana Air. These documents included press releases (3) and media statements (16) gathered in the first month of the plane crash, videos of press conferences (3), and newspaper reports (36) from two major newspapers in June 2012 (Punch – 14 and Guardian - 22). Other documents included AIB's Final Report of the plane crash and Aviation Consulting Group's private investigative Report on the Dana Air crash.

#### **4.1.1.1 Dana Air's Initial Crisis Communication (Response) Strategies**

This section presents an account of the initial crisis response strategies embarked upon by the management of Dana Air. This account presents an analysis of the communication materials released to the public in the month of June 2012 following the plane crash. The identified crisis communication strategies are highlighted in **bold**. Table 4.1 summarizes the communicative efforts from Dana Air's response to the crisis. The analysis after Table 4.1 reveals a one-by-one analysis of the various crisis communication efforts of Dana Air.

**Table 4.1: Summary of Dana Air's Crisis Communicative Efforts**

S/N	Date	Content Material
1.	Monday, 4 June, 2012	Condolence message on Dana Air website from Dana Air management to the bereaved families.
		Press Statement on the crashed aircraft Flight 9J-992 of Sunday, June 3, 2012
		Press Conference by the CEO and Director of Flight Operations on initial information about the crash
		Media statement on the recovery of the Black Box by Search Teams
2.	Tuesday, 5 June, 2012	Media statement condoling with families of the departed
3.	Wednesday, 6 June, 2012	Press conference by Dana Air management with Lagos State officials and Dana Air Insurance representatives to reveal compensation plans.
		Full-page newspaper Obituary condoling with the families of those who lost their lives in the plane crash
4.	Thursday, 7 June, 2012	Press conference by the CEO to brief stakeholders about the crash
5.	Friday, 8 June, 2012	Media statement providing information on the maintenance of the crashed aircraft
6.	Saturday, 9 June, 2012	Media statement on the donation of relief materials to crash victims, and the provision of counselors, psychotherapists to assist and manage trauma.
7.	Sunday, 10 June, 2012	Media statement highlighting Dana Air managements' activities a week after the crash
		Media statement on the visit by Dana Air officials to injured victims at LASUTH
8.	Monday, 11 June, 2012	Media Statement on Dana Air managements' cooperation with LASEMA on welfare of displaced residents
		Full-page newspaper Obituary to mourn the Dana Air crew members who died in the crash
9.	Tuesday, 12 June, 2012	Press release on Dana Air managements' preparation to pay compensation
10.	Thursday, 14 June, 2012	Media statement on next of kin insurance details
11.	Friday, 15 June, 2012	Media statement on Dana Air managements' support for deceased families
		Full-page newspaper obituary condoling with the families of those who lost their lives in the plane crash
	Sunday, 17 June, 2012	Media statement on the Candlelight Service for the deceased
12.	Monday, 18 June -	Media statement on the Joint Senate and House of Representatives Public Hearing
	Saturday, 30 June 2012	
		Media statements on daily updates from efforts by Dana Air management

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2020**

### **Analysis of the condolence message on Dana Air website from Dana Air management to the bereaved families.**

On the day of the plane crash, Sunday, 3 June 2012, there was no record of any message emanating from Dana Air to the public. However, a day after the incident, Monday, 4 June 2012, the management of Dana Air put up a condolence message on the organisation's website (which has since been removed) that read, "Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of guests who were involved in the Dana Air mishap of Sunday, 3rd June 2012. May the souls of the departed rest in peace" (*see Appendix 1*). The condolence message contained helplines through which the public and families of the victims could reach the organisation for possible enquiries.

### **Analysis on the Press Statement on the crashed aircraft Flight 9J-992**

While the condolence message on Dana Air's website may not have been accessible to the public, the management of Dana Air released its **first press statement** signed by its Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Jacky Hathiramani, on Monday afternoon, a day after the plane crash. The press statement (*see Appendix 2*) was an official statement from Dana Air to confirm the tragic incident, express sadness over the loss of passengers and assure stakeholders of the provision of the necessary information as soon as they were received. The press statement reads thus:

The Dana Air family is deeply saddened by the tragic loss of the passengers and crew of Flight 9J-992 of Sunday, 3rd June 2012. The aircraft with Registration Number 5N-RAM departed Abuja for Lagos with 146 passengers onboard. 1 Dana Air Flight Engineer, 2 Pilots and 4 Cabin Crew were also aboard the flight.

We extend our deepest sympathies to the families and friends of the deceased, and we are doing everything we can to assist them in this extremely difficult time. A 24hr Call Centre service has been initiated and we have also set up an information centre at MMA2 to look after their needs and keep them as quickly informed as possible.

An investigation into the cause of the accident got underway immediately, under the guidance of the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), who are being assisted by investigators from the U.S National Safety Transportation Board (NSTB). Dana Air is cooperating fully and assisting the investigation in every possible way. In accordance with international protocol governing aviation accident investigations, all information about the investigation will come from the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority. Dana Air will, however, provide information relating to the flight itself and updates on steps being taken.

Once again, we at Dana Air extend our profound condolences.

Jacky Hathiramani

Chief Executive Officer (Dana Air Press Release, June 4, 2012)

The initial press release signalled the commencement of the crisis communication (response) strategies employed by the management of Dana Air to respond to the plane crash issues. Dana Air's first press statement was signed by the crisis manager and chief mourner, the CEO Jacky Hathiramani. He first **confirms** the tragic incident and expressed his organisation's sadness and sympathy/**empathy/compassion** over the incident and assured families of the victims of Dana Air's readiness to assist during the tragic period, including the provision of a 24-hour call and information hub (**provision of information**) at the Murtala Muhammed Airport 2 (MMA2) to keep them informed about developments as they arose. He further noted that, at the time of the press release, Dana Air was unaware of the cause(s) of the tragic incident. However, he stressed that investigations into the crash had begun and further reiterated the **commitment** of Dana Air to cooperating fully with investigators from Nigeria and the U.S.A through the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) and the U.S National Safety Transportation Board (NSTB). The NSTB was assisting in investigations because the US manufactured the crashed aircraft.



### **Analysis of the Press Conference by Dana Air CEO and Director of Flight Operations on initial information about the plane crash**

Findings further revealed that after the first press release, which came 24 hours after the crash, Dana Air's management provided subsequent statements, press conferences, and daily updated information. For instance, on Monday, 4 June 2012, the Director of Dana Air's Flight Operations, Capt. Oscar Wason responded to allegations surrounding the age of the crashed aircraft at a press conference held at the Murtala Muhammed Airport, Lagos. Capt. Wason informed the press that the management of Dana bought the crashed aircraft "from the representatives of an American carrier, Alaska Airlines, which phased it out from its fleet over five years ago" (Punch newspaper, June 6, 2012: 36). He further revealed that although the aircraft was 22 years old when it crashed, its number of years had nothing to do with its safety as regular maintenance was carried out on their aircraft. "The MD 83 that crashed is 22 years old, but the age has nothing to do with its safety" (Punch Newspaper, June 6, 2012:36).

However, the investigations into the crashed aircraft revealed a breach of an earlier aviation policy of the Nigerian government on the age of aircraft that must be brought into Nigeria. Through the Minister of Aviation, Kema Chikwe, the Federal Government had in 2002 directed a total phase-out of all aircraft that were twenty-two (22) years and above from the Nigerian airspace. This directive was issued in response to plane crashes in early 2001 and May 2002, particularly the May 2002 BAC One-Eleven 500 twin-engine jet that crashed into houses after taking off from the Mallam Aminu Kano International Airport, killing 75 passengers and crew on board and a further 70 people on the ground (Shadare, 2012). After this plane crash, Mrs. Chikwe had directed that no plane from twenty-two (22) years must fly the Nigerian airspace. However, a caveat from the policy meant that aircraft that were yet to clock 22 years before entering the country could continue even after they had clocked the 22 years while operating in Nigeria.

While the aviation policy could be clear on the age of aircraft that must not fly within the Nigerian airspace, the policy implementation aspect remained unclear. It was clear that any plane less than 22 years could fly the Nigerian airspace. However, what happens when such aircraft flying the Nigerian airspace becomes older than 22 years? A possible reason for the ambiguous policy could be that such a policy was not research-driven. In other words, it could be said that the enacted policy was not a result

of research. Again, policy actors, including policy researchers, may not have been carried along by the Ministry of Aviation. Thus, it presented a gap in the policy document of the aviation industry because policies are a set of actions established to guide the realisation of set goals and objectives. When a policy becomes unclear or too ambiguous, it becomes difficult to achieve its goals. Could Dana Air then be said to have contravened this policy? Maybe they did not. Little wonder Capt. Wason was convinced that the age of the aircraft had nothing to do with its safety.

### **Analysis of Media statement on the recovery of the Black Box by Search Teams**

On Monday, 4th June 2012, Dana Air released a media statement centered on recovering the aircraft's black box following the press conference. The statement signalled a ray of hope in their search for the crash's causes. The statement further quoted the CEO as grateful for the progress made to determine the crash's immediate cause(s). Again, Mr. Hathiramani, the crisis leader, shows support and cooperation for ongoing investigations into the crash. Thus, he displayed courage, resilience, and openness in investigations into the cause(s) of the plane crash. He further expressed grief and sorrow over the death of the pilots and crew members, whom he described as their most dedicated and most exemplary staff enviable by other organisations. Mr. Hathiramani openly grieved for the families of dead victims and the loss of crew members (**victimage**) who also lost their lives in the crash as he further provided updated information on the recovery of 109 bodies at the time of the statement.

The statement (in Appendix 3) further **provided information** about the Flight Captain (FC) and First Officer (FO) of the ill-fated plane whose licenses were verifiable with the NCAA. The statement also revealed that the crashed aircraft maintained all statutory checks and maintenance and was airworthy. The message ended by appreciating Nigerians (**ingratiation**) and enjoined all citizens to pray for the families of the victims and the injured. Also, through this statement, Dana Air's management portrayed the organisation as one that possessed human sympathy. They provided information and updated families of the victims and the stakeholders in general by providing information about the licence and status of the late pilots and the aircraft. The licence and status information of the late pilots was to remove doubts and dispel rumours about the airworthiness of the aircraft and the licences to fly of the pilots.

Two days after the crash, precisely on Tuesday, 5th June 2012, the Federal Government of Nigeria declared three days of national mourning to honour and mourn the crash victims. The Federal Government of Nigeria also grounded Dana Air's flight operations throughout its five destinations and further suspended Dana Air's operating licence. The suspension was necessary to allow the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) to conduct comprehensive investigations into the crash. The media aide to the Minister of Aviation, Mr. Joe Obi, confirmed the suspension in an interview with the Guardian newspaper. Obi noted that the suspension was indefinitely pending investigations (Guardian Newspaper, June 5, 2012). In addition, the Special Adviser to President Goodluck Jonathan, Dr. Reuben Abati, confirmed the grounding of Dana Air's flight operations through his Twitter handle. "Dana Air has been grounded by the Federal Government. Investigations ongoing," Abati tweeted.

#### **Analysis of the media statement condoling with families of the departed**

Despite the news of Dana Air's operations suspension, the airline's management nonetheless responded and reacted to the tragic incident by condoling with the bereaved families. On Tuesday, June 5, 2012 – two (2) days after the crash – the Chairman of the organisation, Ramesh Hathiramani, met with the bereaved families at the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital's morgue Ikeja, where the victims' bodies were deposited. Mr. Hathiramani, while condoling with the families, expressed sympathy and assured them (**commitment/assurance**) that Dana Air was with them in prayers. The Chairman further took responsibility for the fatal incident and promised to support the victims' families. "The airline would do everything possible to ensure that your concerns are handled. When you do have a fatality, it is your responsibility to step up to the plate," Hathiramani had stated (**subtle apology**) (*see Appendix 4*). The statement further provided information on Hathiramani's second visit in three days to the crash site to sympathise with the affected residents and families, as he revealed the recovery of 151 bodies. The statement also provided helplines for further information from members of the public.

#### **Analysis of Press conference by Dana Air management, Lagos State officials and the representatives of Dana Air Insurance company on compensation plans**

On the third day after the crash, Mr. Ade Ipaye, the Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice in Lagos State, led top State officials during a press conference to **provide updated information** to stakeholders on plans by Dana Air to process compensation. Officials at the press conference included the Commissioner of Health, Dr. Jide Idris, Commissioner for Special Duties, Dr. Wale Ahmed, General Manager, Dana Air, Suhail Farooqui, Director Dana Air, Mr. Francis Ogboro, and other representatives of Dana Air's insurance company – Lloyds of London. At the press conference, the insurance company disclosed that the management of Dana Air would adequately compensate (**compensation**) the bereaved according to the International Law and Aviation Standards (Guardian newspaper, June 7, 2012: 2). As of 2012, the international law stipulated that the sum of thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000 or N4.6 million) be paid to families of each victim within the first thirty (30) days of the incident while a final payment of \$100,000 (N15 million) be paid later to the families after the completion of the requirements by the law (Guardian, Thursday, June 7, 2012). Mr. Ogboro also informed journalists at the press conference that the crashed aircraft underwent strenuous checks before it was allowed to fly. According to him, the airline's "chief engineer certainly would not have allowed the aircraft to take off if there was a problem...no airline crew goes on a suicide mission" (excerpts from the press conference - **victimage**).

### **Full-page newspaper obituary condoling families of departed victims**

As part of the strategies to mourn the victims and show remorse for the tragic incident, a full-page obituary was placed by the management of Dana Air in the Guardian newspaper on Wednesday, June 6, 2012, and in the Punch newspaper on Thursday, June 7, 2012. The message in the obituary (*see appendix 5*), written against a black background and three (3) images of lit candles (to signify mourning), read:

Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of all who lost their lives in the Dana Air mishap of Sunday, June 3, 2012.  
May the souls of the departed rest in peace.  
Dana Air Management and Staff  
(Obituary Statement, Guardian Newspaper, June 6, 2012)

### **Press conference by the CEO to brief stakeholders about the crash**

On the fourth day after the crash, Thursday, June 7, 2012, the CEO of Dana Air addressed a press conference at the Skyline Hotel, Ikeja, Lagos. The CEO's statement commiserated with the families of the victims and the injured and provided both **instructing and adjusting information** to the public members. He further provided information on the efforts of Dana Air in responding to the crisis and with the relevant regulatory agencies in carrying out their investigations. The Nigerian President, Goodluck Jonathan, the Lagos State Governor, Babatunde Fashola, and the Aviation Minister, Stella Oduah, were also commended in the press statement for their support and leadership to Dana Air during the incident (**ingratiation**). The CEO also assured the bereaved and injured families of Dana Air's commitment to assisting them in every possible way, including providing updated information (*see Appendix 6*).

Again, Jacky Hathiramani expressed sympathy over the tragic incident and provided further information on the airline's efforts to provide necessary assistance to the victims' families. He reiterated that the cause of the sad incident was still unknown. He further disclosed that their Chairman visited the crash site several times to condole with the families of the dead, injured, and the community. These gestures further portray Dana Air as both responsible and responsive to the plight of families of not just victims, but for those displaced by the incident, as plans to provide relief materials were already in place. Also, the statement included contact phone numbers for further calls and information from the public.

#### **Media statement providing information on the maintenance of crashed aircraft**

During crises, rumours, fake news, misinformation, and disinformation are common occurrences. In the case of Dana Air, there were reported rumours that the crashed aircraft was faulty and not airworthy. In fact, some sections of the media and other people had reported that the crashed aircraft had developed technical faults, leading to an emergency landing in Uyo some days before the crash. A former member of staff of Dana Air had spoken with Channels TV a day after the crash and revealed that the crashed aircraft "had always been giving faults from time." There were also reports in the Guardian newspaper on Monday, June 4, 2012, attributed to Stella Oduah, the Minister of Aviation at the time, that the late pilot of the crashed plane, Peter Waxton,

declared an emergency with the Lagos Control Tower at 11 nautical miles to the Murtala Muhammed Airport, Lagos (Shadare, 2012).

However, these rumours, misinformation, and allegations were debunked by the CEO, Jacky Hathiramani and the Director of Flight Operations, Capt. Wason, during a press conference, only four days after the crash (Thursday, June 7, 2012). Capt. While responding to some of the allegations, Capt. Wason disclosed that the late pilot did not have a chance to speak with the Lagos Control Tower, and thus, it was unprofessional for anyone to jump to conclusions on the possible crash's cause. He further debunked the allegations that the aircraft that malfunctioned days before was the same as the crashed aircraft (*see appendix 7*):

He was released from the radar control to Control Tower, but he never made the call. The only conclusion we can come to at this point in time is that he reported that he had an engine failure. Investigations will show exactly what really happened...The only way that aircraft could have crashed is if it lost both engines. They are speculations. At this point in time, we do not even know. The cause of the crash the flight data recorder and voice recorder have been retrieved from the crash and sent abroad for investigation...The NCAA do perform audits on the airline unannounced. They can do an audit every week, every month, it all depends. It is independently done and we are not advised when they are coming. This aircraft was not the one that had any technical malfunction in Uyo or it was grounded. Two days, prior, the aircraft was in a scheduled maintenance called the A-checks and thereafter the aircraft was released for flight. The previous aircraft that everybody is referring to that had declared an emergency is a different aircraft which is 5N-SRI and that aircraft is momentarily in Istanbul going through its heavy annual compulsory C-Check <sic>. (Dana Air Press Conference Excerpts, June, 7, 2012)

Also speaking during the press conference, the CEO commiserated with the families and friends of the bereaved and injured. He specifically paid tributes to the gallant crew members who lost their lives in the tragic incident. "Captain Peter Waxton, First Officer, Mahendra Rathore, Jane, Uche, Onyi and Eke we all knew them so well." (*see appendix 7*) (**victimage**). He further debunked the rumours that the age of the aircraft was responsible for the plane crash (*see appendix 7*). Excerpts of the statement reads:

The brand of airplane as you know was an MD-80 there are nearly 900 of these flying currently internationally. More than half of them are owned and operated by American Airlines and Delta Airlines. In fact their average age of their fleet of those aircraft are even more than ours and even the age of our fleet is not considered to be any short because even within the country here you have airlines flying even more than the age of this aircraft. (Dana Air Press Conference Excerpts, June, 7, 2012)

Jacky Hathiramani's statement put an end to the rumours concerning the age of the aircraft being responsible for the crash. This is the **justification** strategy as they provided reasons for still flying such aircraft within the Nigerian airspace. Interestingly, on the fifth day after the crash, another statement was released that further debunked the rumours of the airworthiness of the crashed aircraft. The statement (*see appendix 8*) revealed that the safety of passengers and crew was important to the organisation as it fully maintained its aircraft. The statement reads:

At Dana Air, the safety of our passengers and crew is of paramount importance.

The aircraft involved in the accident, a Boeing MD83 (Registration number 5N-RAM), was maintained correctly and fully in accordance with the manufacturer's schedule and directives from the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority.

It had lost 400-hourly check (A-Check) on May 30, 2012. The statutory annual maintenance (C-Check) was not due until September 2012. The Certificate of Airworthiness issued by the NCAA after its last C-Check was completely valid as at the time of the accident.

We adhere strictly to the maintenance schedule of all our aircraft as prescribed by the manufacturers, and the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority. Dana Air has a maintenance agreement with Matching – an international, world-class aviation maintenance organisation (MRO), which is located at our Lagos base. It performs and supervises all local maintenance tasks, including the daily servicing and release of our aircraft for operations. Our scheduled maintenance checks (C-Checks) are done by leading MRO companies overseas. (Dana Air Press Release, June 7, 2012).

Thus, Dana Air reiterated its commitment to the safety of its passengers and crew at all times. With this statement, the management of Dana Air ended the rumours about the airworthiness of the crashed aircraft. According to the statement, the aircraft's Airworthiness Certificate retrieved from the NCAA when the previous maintenance was carried out remained valid when the crash occurred.

**Media statement on the donation of relief materials to crash victims, and the provision of counselors, psychotherapists to assist and manage trauma**

Further analysis of Dana Air's response strategies revealed that six days after the crash, Dana Air donated relief materials to the injured victims as they had earlier promised to do. Some of the relief materials donated included food items, mattresses, clothes, blankets, kitchen utensils, among others. In addition to these relief materials, the airline's management recruited psychotherapists and counsellors to assist in managing anxiety, trauma, and other ailments caused by the tragic incidents on the family members. Speaking during the presentation of relief materials, a Director at Dana Air, Guatam Hathiramani, also expressed sadness over the tragic incident and promised to do everything to ensure the recovery of lost property. He added that the relief materials would be a continuous exercise, and accommodation arrangements had been concluded to ameliorate the sufferings of the victims (*see Appendix 9*).

**Media statement highlighting Dana Air managements' activities and Visit to injured victims at LASUTH a week after the crash**

A week after the plane crash, Sunday, June 10, 2012, Dana Air provided updated information on its steps in responding to the crisis over the past week. This information was posted in a statement titled "One Week On" (*see Appendix 10*). The statement commenced by commiserating with the friends and families of the dead victims and reiterated earlier information about its management visit to the families of the deceased. The statement further provided updates on the efforts by the management of Dana Air in conjunction with the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH) in ensuring that the families of the deceased had a smooth burial for the dead victims. Also, updated information on the provision of temporary accommodation to forty-one (41) injured residents whose houses were lost from the incident and the provision of beds, food items, and cooking utensils. Furthermore, the statement reiterated the importance that Dana Air placed on the safety of passengers and provided information on its efforts at cooperating and assisting the AIB in their investigations (*see Appendix 10*).

In another statement released on Sunday, June 10, 2012, Dana Air's management revealed that they had visited injured victims receiving treatment at the Lagos State



Teaching Hospital (LASUTH). The statement further revealed the airline's readiness to pay the medical bills of the four (4) patients who suffered varying degrees of injury and would provide further assistance until they were fully recovered. The airline provided helplines strictly for families and close relatives for enquiries.

### **Media Statement on Dana Air managements' cooperation with LASEMA on welfare of displaced residents**

Eight days after the crash, June 11 2012, Dana Air, in another statement, expressed its support for the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA), a body established by the Lagos State government to oversee the actions of all relevant government agencies and ministries, as well as non-governmental organisations, in crisis management. LASEMA was tasked to guarantee that the displaced residents at the crash site were adequately cared for. In the statement, the Head of Corporate Communications of the airline, Tony Usidamen, thanked the Governor of Lagos State for portraying exemplary leadership after the incident occurred (see appendix 12). The statement (*see appendix 12*) further reiterated the organisation's commitments to assisting all the families of the bereaved and the injured. As with other previous media statements, a 24-hour assistance contact telephone number was provided with a caveat to journalists not to call the other toll-free numbers.

### **Full-page newspaper Obituary to mourn the Dana Air crew members who died in the crash**

Furthermore, on the eighth day after the crash, Dana Air put up a full-page obituary in the Guardian newspaper (*see Appendix 13*) to mourn its crew members whose lives were lost in the unfortunate incident. The obituary contained pictures of the crew members, including the late pilot, Peter Waxton, his co-pilot, Mahendra Rathore, the flight engineer, Widy Utomo, and four cabin crew members Onyinye Mgbangwa, Vivienne Atangakak, Uche Ulasi, and Eke Godwin. A short grieving message also accompanied the pictures. "Angels in the Sky. You served with humanity and flew with pride. You will forever be missed. Dana Air Management and Staff" (Guardian newspaper, Monday, June 11, 2012: 25). By doing this, Dana Air showed concern for its staff members whose lives were lost in the crash.

### **Press release on Dana Air managements' preparation to pay compensation**

The ninth day after the crash saw Dana Air prepare to pay compensation in the form of claims to families of the departed victims and those whose properties were destroyed by the incident. This information was contained in a press statement by the CEO, Jacky Hathiramani, on June 12, 2012. According to Hathiramani, Dana Air had put the necessary structure in place, including opening three (3) dedicated toll-free lines managed by skilled personnel and ensuring the smooth payment of claims to the bereaved families. He, however, acknowledged that although no amount of compensation could make up for the lives of the dead, Dana Air was embarking on such gesture as a mark of honour.

### **Media statement on next of kin insurance details**

Furthermore, eleven days after the crash, Dana Air, once again, released another statement and directed to families of the victims to present necessary information of their next-of-kins- for insurance claims purposes. The notice, released on Thursday, June 14, 2020, and published in the Guardian newspaper on Friday, June 15 and Monday, June 18, 2012, requested families to respond promptly and sensitively (*see appendix 15*).

### **Media statement on Dana Air managements' support for deceased families**

In another related release on the twelfth day after the crash, Friday, June 15, 2012, Dana Air re-affirmed its support to the bereaved families and the investigators from the AIB. Information from the statement (*see appendix 16*) revealed that the management was committed to ensuring thorough investigations and assisting the AIB as they sought to unravel the cause(s) of the ill-fated accident. Also, the bereaved families received further assurances on their submissions made towards the insurance claims. The statement further informed stakeholders of the frequent visits by Dana Air's top management executives to the families of those affected and displaced and provided relief materials to them. Updated information in the statement revealed that injured persons affected by the accident were discharged from the hospital.

**Full-page newspaper obituary condoling with the families of those who lost their lives in the plane crash**

Similarly, another full-page condolence obituary was published in the Punch newspaper on Friday, June 15, 2012 (*see appendix 17*), commiserating with families of the victims and to those whose lives were touched by the tragedy. Contact numbers were also provided.

All of us at Dana Air are deeply saddened by the tragic accident of Flight 992 on Sunday, June 3, 2012.

Our most heartfelt thoughts and prayers continue to be with the families and friends of those who lost their lives and anyone else whose lives have been touched by this tragedy.

The Management and Staff of Dana Air.  
(Dana Air Obituary Statement, June 15, 2012)

Again, the management of Dana Air portrayed genuine commiseration to families of the departed through its sustained efforts, as observed in the constant paid full-page newspaper obituaries. This gesture is reflected in almost all the communication materials that emanated from the airline to the publics. To further show the organisation's sincere condolence, officials and cabin crew members of the airline on Sunday, June 17, 2012, attended a candlelight service at the Muri Okunola Park, Lagos, in honour of the deceased organised by a non-governmental organisation. During the service, the Head of Corporate Communications of the airline, Tony Usidamen, again expressed condolence to bereaved families and stressed the organisation's commitment to assisting families left behind in every way possible (*see appendix 18*).

**Media statement on the Joint Senate & House of Representatives Public Hearing**

In addition, as part of the federal government's investigation into the sad incident, a Public Hearing was conducted by the Nigerian Senate and House of Representatives Joint Committee on Aviation on Friday, June 22, 2012. The Joint House invited Dana Air officials to answer the Committee's questions about the tragic incident. At the public hearing led by Dana Air's CEO, Jacky Hathiramani, and attended by top Dana Air officials, the organisation again expressed condolences to the bereaved families and friends. Further, it stressed its commitment to assisting all investigating bodies to unravel the cause(s) of the tragic incident. Hathiramani additionally updated the Joint

House on all necessary information available about the crash as well as the steps taken to provide the required support, such as counselling to the affected family members and to ensure the prompt advance compensation to be paid to relatives who came forward with claims within thirty (30) days of the incident (*appendix 19*).

### **Media statements on daily updates from efforts by Dana Air management**

Subsequent crisis communication materials retrieved for this study further revealed that Dana Air provided continuous updates on necessary information needed by the publics on the incident. For instance, a section of the organisation's website (which has since been removed) was dedicated to answering questions raised by journalists and members of the public about the tragic incident. Also, a column on the organisation's website provided information on ongoing activities in responding to the sad incident. Some of the updates provided information about the total number of relatives of each deceased family that had returned the completed insurance forms, including families of its staff members. Updates were also provided on the organisation's engagements with the Lagos State Government and other organisational activities (*see Appendix 20*).

To further complement content analysed data, key informant interviews from the crisis management team and editors, and correspondents revealed that Dana Air provided information to all the stakeholders. For instance, one of the interviewees, Participant B noted that Dana Air constantly informed relevant stakeholders, including the media and regulators. According to Key Informant Participant B:

Dana Air, the affected airline during the June 3, 2012 plane crash, deployed engagement with the industry regulator: Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), the Media and Families of Crash Victims, the Insurers, and a team of Counsellors in the release and management of Information through the Crisis/Communication Centre set up at the Lagos Airport. Besides, Dana Air engaged in the timely release of updated information to the media to feed the public. The airline also engaged industry safety-centric groups like the Pilots/Aircraft Engineers Association and other industry think tank groups to comment on development that will not jeopardize the outcome of the Investigators probe. It engaged in public enlightenment with write-ups, news commentaries, radio and television appearances by industry experts on the issue. (Key Informant Participant B, Male, Lagos, 7th June, 2021).

The disclosure from Key Informant Participant B showed that Dana Air engaged relevant stakeholders and constantly provided information to help them make sense of

the incident. Also, Dana Air was involved in the timely release of information to the media to feed the public. This meant that Dana Air worked closely with the media. In corroborating Key Informant Participant B's opinion on working with the media, another interviewee, Key Informant Participant A, opined that Dana Air managed the media as they constantly provided updated information for dissemination to the public. According to Key Informant Participant A:

I was one of those deployed to the crash site on the day of the incident. All through the period, I was able to get extensive information for ... newspaper. Dana Air did not try to conceal information. They managed the media arm very well...they did not hide anything. In fact, that was the main thing that really went well for them. It was well coordinated. (Key Informant Participant A, Male, Lagos, 5th June, 2021).

In addition, one of the team members who managed the crisis (Key Informant Participant E) disclosed that Dana Air responded promptly to the crisis by providing constant information:

It was a devastating period. The task before us was enormous, but we knew that we could pull through with constant communication and determination. One of our guiding principles was to respond promptly to fill every information gap. So, we ensured there was always an update on the previous information given to the public in all response materials. (Key Informant Participant E, Ibadan, 17th January, 2021).

From the preceding, it is evident that Dana Air constantly provided information to the stakeholders. They used the media to get their messages across to the publics. Apart from providing information, Dana Air focused on the payment of compensations to the families of the deceased and injured. Furthermore, another interviewee, Key Informant Participant C, revealed that the management of Dana Air showed empathy and commitment to paying compensations. According to Key Informant Participant C, "...the airline (Dana Air) showed empathy with the family of those that lost their lives... They showed more commitment in that compensation obligation because, before them, there was no effective effort to compensate similar victims before." Hence, the constant provision of (updated) information, a promise to pay compensation, and communicating with empathy were the crisis communication strategy revealed from the interviews. These strategies are in tandem with those observed from the content analysed communication materials. Table 4.2 presents a summary of Dana Air's crisis response strategies.

**Table 4.2: Summary of Crisis Response Strategies Employed by Dana Air**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Crisis Response Strategy</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
1.	Empathy/compassion	Showed compassion to the victims (dead and injured). Empathy/compassion was revealed in almost all communication efforts from Dana Air
2.	Confirmation	Dana Air was involved in acts that strengthened existing promises by providing instructing and adjusting information
3.	Commitment/assurance	Dana Air was committed to various causes and assured the publics of taking action.
4.	Compensation	Dana Air offered to pay monetary compensation to families of the dead victims and provide relief materials to the injured victims, including settling all hospital bills.
5.	Victimage	Dana Air presented itself as a victim of the crisis as they also lost crew members and an Engineer.
6.	Apology	Apologised and took responsibility for the crash
7.	Justification	Providing reasons for the use of the age of the crashed aircraft within the Nigerian airspace. This was done to prove that the age of the aircraft was not responsible for the crash.
8.	Reminder	Dana Air reminded stakeholders of their past good deeds and stressing
9.	Ingratiation	Dana Air constantly praised all stakeholder groups for their support during the dark period.
10.	Constant provision of instructing and adjusting information	Most frequently used crisis strategy. Dana Air constantly provided information to the stakeholders to keep them updated on crisis happenings.

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2020**

#### **4.1.2 Research Question Two - Which of the Dana Air crisis communication strategies were most effective?**

Research question two sought to investigate the mostly employed and effective crisis communication strategies and understand the perceptions of key stakeholders on the strategies that proved most effective. Therefore, in answering this research question, a frequency count of the crisis response strategies on all communication materials was retrieved, followed by an analysis and discussion of these strategies. The study also sought to investigate the opinions of different stakeholder groups on the most effective strategies. Table 4.3 presents the frequency of the summary of the crisis communication strategies from Dana Air.

**Table 4.3: Summary of the Crisis Response Strategies from Dana Air’s Crisis Response**

S/N	Crisis Communication Strategy	Frequency		Total
		Content Analysed materials	Interviews	
1.	Empathy/compassion	17	1	18
2.	Confirmation	2	1	3
3.	Commitment/assurance	18	3	21
4.	Compensation	13	6	19
5.	Victimage	6	-	6
6.	Apology	1	-	1
7.	Justification	1	-	1
8.	Reminder	1	-	1
9.	Ingratiation	7	1	8
10.	Constant provision of instructing and adjusting information	29	9	38

**Source: Researcher’s fieldwork, 2020**



The data from Table 4.3 reveal that Dana Air mainly used four crisis communication strategies. These include the constant provision of (updated) information occurring thirty-eight (38) times; commitment/assurance strategies employed twenty-one (21) times; compensation strategies used nineteen (19) times; and communicating with empathy and compassion employed eighteen (18) times. Other strategies employed by Dana Air include the ingratiation strategy employed eight (8) times; the victimage strategy used six (6) times; the confirmation strategy, which was employed three (3) times; and the apology, justification, and reminder strategies, which were used once, respectively.

### **Constant Provision of Instructing and Adjusting Information**

The constant provision of information was the most employed strategy from Dana Air. Providing (updated) information is necessary during a crisis because stakeholders and the public need to know what happened and how the crisis will affect them. Sturges and Coombs (2007) described the provision of updated information as instructive and adjusting information. Dana Air disclosed that it was committed to providing instructive and adjusting information to stakeholders and the public. Some phrases that revealed Dana Air's solve at providing information through its communication materials include, "Dana Air will, however, provide information relating to the flight itself and updates on steps being taken" (see Appendix 2); "...we will continue to offer our full support while the investigations last" (see Appendix 3); "...We are as determined to get to the bottom of this to find out exactly what happened, and we will and when it is known, we will share this with you," (see Appendix 7); and statements that showed the willingness to offer assistance and provide updated information to the families of the deceased and injured (see Appendix 16), among others.

In addition, qualitative data from the key informant interviews further revealed the efforts of Dana Air's management in constantly providing information to different stakeholder groups and the general public through the media. For instance, a crisis team member disclosed that the provision of constant information was one of their main priorities. "...one of our guiding principles was to respond promptly to fill every information gap. So, we ensured there was always an update on the previous information given to the public in all response materials." This opinion is further corroborated by one of the key informant interviewees for the study, Key Informant

Participant C, who also believed that Dana Air provided constant information tactics to the stakeholders. According to Key Informant Participant C, Dana Air “concentrated on updating Nigerians about the process to compensate the families who lost their loved ones while at the same time enabling the investigators of the crash to find out what actually happened.”

It appeared that the constant provision of (updated) information, which was the most employed crisis communication strategy, was one of the factors that ensured their return to business. This was the opinion of two interviewees, who believed that Dana Air’s information dissemination was well coordinated and worked well for them. For instance, Key Informant Participant B, opined that “Dana Air’s engagement with media and critical stakeholders was the winning streak.” Similarly, Key Informant Participant A also opined that Dana Air coordinated its information dissemination effectively and went well for them. Key Informant Participant A stated that:

Dana Air managed the media arm very well. They were not evasive. They did not try to conceal information...the then Head of Forensic, LASUTH, Prof. John Obafunwa, a pathologist by training, was also readily available, taking questions from the general public, including the media. So, they didn’t hide anything. Infact, that’s the main thing that really went well for them. It was very well coordinated. (Key Informant Participant A, Male, Lagos 5th June, 2021).

It could, therefore, be inferred that one of the effective crisis communication strategies from Dana Air was its constant provision of updated information. Next, an analysis of the second mostly employed crisis communication strategy – commitment/assurance strategy is presented.

### **Commitment/Assurance Crisis Communication Strategy**

Besides providing information, Dana Air also frequently employed the commitment/assurance crisis communication strategy, which was used twenty-one (21) times. The commitment strategy presented Dana Air as pledging itself to various causes after the tragic incident. They employed commitment to promise stakeholders of providing regular information, continuous support to families of the victims and injured, among others. This was found in committing words such as, “we will, we are, we shall,” among others.

Furthermore, Dana Air's use of the commitment/assurance strategy is found through its constant expression of sympathy towards the incident and assuring families of the victims of continuous support by providing relief materials and temporary accommodation. For instance, some statements assured the families and friends of the victims of Dana Air's assistance in every possible way (see Appendix 6), assurance statements of compensation (see Appendix 9), commitment to providing temporary accommodation and necessary items for injured victims (see Appendix 10), among others. In addition, Dana Air made commitments of their readiness to ensure that the victims' families could bury their loved ones (see Appendix 10). Dana Air further assured stakeholders and Nigerians in general of their commitment to revealing the cause(s) of the tragic incident as soon as it was made available by the AIB (see Appendices 16 and 19). Finally, Dana Air committed itself and affirmed one of its obligations to its stakeholders, especially the passengers - past and present - of continuous safety (see Appendices 8, 10, and 24).

### **Compensation Crisis Communication Strategy**

The findings further revealed that the compensation crisis communication strategy frequently occurred in the communication materials from Dana Air. The compensation strategy appeared nineteen (19) times and was used by Dana Air to reveal their intentions to pay compensation (monetary assistance or relief packages) to families of the victims as well as injured victims. CEO Jacky Hathiramani initially mentioned the compensation scheme during a news conference in Lagos on June 7, 2012. Dana Air, according to Hathiramani, focused on supporting the bereaved families despite the fact that the reason of the accident was unknown. He stated that Dana Air's whole senior management team was committed on offering assistance to the families (see Appendix 6). The CEO further provided insights into Dana Air's compensation plans for the injured victims (see Appendix 6).

The management of Dana Air kept to their words on the relief packages for injured victims of the crash as the relief materials were donated a day after the CEO's press conference. The relief materials such as food items, blankets, clothes, mattresses, kitchen utensils, among others, were donated by one of the airline's Directors, who remarked that the provision of relief materials was a continuous exercise. He further added that besides from the relief materials, Dana Air was making further arrangements

to provide accommodation to all the victims who lost their property to the tragic incident. The CEO further stated that Dana Air had engaged the services of counsellors and psychotherapists to assist in managing anxiety, trauma, anxiety, and other psychological effects caused by the incident. Also, Dana Air, while promising that the injured victims would receive assistance until full recovery, further pledged to offset the medical bills of the patients who suffered burns due to the incident.

For the families and relatives of the dead victims, Dana Air them of their readiness to paying compensations according to the law. The airlines' management further reassured the families and relatives of the bereaved that their insurance agents were prepared to commence the compensation process and had started to identify the bereaved families. Furthermore, Dana Air gave a daily update on its efforts to pay compensation to the victims' families. On June 28, 2012, Dana Air informed stakeholders of the direct contacts made with 119 of the 120 bereaved families and had, at that time, received 50 completed insurance forms from the families.

### **Empathy and Compassion Crisis Communication Strategy**

Another of the mostly employed communication strategy by the management of Dana Air was its use of empathy and compassion strategies. The empathy/sympathy tactics present Dana Air as a compassionate organisation with human feelings. They show compassion and empathise with the families of victims and those injured following the tragic incident. These tactics were employed eighteen (18) times, and they appeared in almost every content material that the organisation released to the media and stakeholders. The use of sentences such as “our thoughts and prayers are with families of all who lost their lives...” “...we extend our deepest sympathies to the families and friends of the deceased...” “...we at Dana Air extend our profound condolences...” “...may the souls of the departed rest in peace...” among others present Dana Air as genuinely concerned and empathize with families of the victims and injured.

From the first message that appeared on Dana Air's website to the first press statement released on Monday, June 4, 2012, Dana Air employed empathy/sympathy tactics to show remorse and compassion about the incident (*see Appendix 1*). Also, the excerpts from the press statement (*see Appendix 2*) depicted the use of empathy/sympathy tactics. “The Dana Air family is deeply saddened by the tragic loss of the passengers

and crew of Flight 9J-992 of Sunday, June 3, 2012...We extend our deepest sympathies....” In addition, the Chairman of the airline, Ramesh Hathiramani, employed empathy/sympathy tactics when he met with family members of the victims. He stated that words were not enough to express their grief during the devastating period. He further noted that Dana Air's management was with the bereaved families at such a period. Also, a public display of empathy and sympathy tactics was observed on June 7, 2012, at a press conference where all staff wore black clothes. In Nigeria, dark clothes are worn when mourning. The CEO employed empathy/sympathy tactics at the press conference throughout his statement (*see Appendix 2*).

Jacky Hathiramani displayed another remarkable public show of empathy/sympathy tactics during another press conference on June 8, 2012 (*see Appendix 7*). He broke down in tears while mentioning the names of crew members whose lives were lost in the tragic incident (victimage strategy). Other instances where Dana Air employed the empathy/sympathy tactics was a week after the sad incident occurred (*see Appendix 10*); newspaper obituaries commiserating with crew members (*see Appendix 13*) and families of the victims (*see Appendix 17*); during a candlelight service organized for the victims (*see Appendix 18*) and during a Public Hearing by the Senate and House of Representatives (*see Appendix 19*).

These mostly employed crisis communication strategies (constant provision of (updated) information, commitment/assurance, compensation, and empathy/compassion) employed by Dana Air in response to the crisis present the management of Dana Air as responsive to the stakeholders and the crisis. The responsiveness is revealed in how they provided constant information with empathy/compassion, assured of the payment of compensation, and always committed themselves to several causes. Some of the qualitative data from the key informant interviews revealed that the management of Dana Air mostly employed these strategies as there was no similar effort from airlines with similar crises in the past. Key Informant Participant C stated that “...they showed more commitment in that compensation obligation because, before them, there was no effective effort to compensate similar victims before.” As a result, Key Informant Participant D opined that “the accident was handled well because after it happened, the airline was allowed to continue to fly, which was not the trend before then.”

Similarly, Key Informant Participant B stated that these mainly employed crisis communication strategies were used to clarify rumours and save the organisation's reputation. As Key Informant Participant B opined:

There is always a perception challenge whenever plane crashes occur in Nigeria. The public thinks that the planes are not airworthy or unsafe without any empirical evidence to drive such accusations. Secondly, they allege that the crew may not be proficient, suggesting either loose regulation driven by cutting corners or compromise. Thirdly, they allege that the airspace is littered with flying coffins and probabilities that there is poor maintenance culture by operators. These false positions need to be clarified by the relevant aeronautical authorities. This baggage of bad image perception is a major crisis that has to be tackled professionally whenever a plane crash occurs. (Key Informant Participant B, Male, Lagos, 7th June, 2021).

Key Informant Participant B's position implies that the Dana Air plane crash presented an opportunity to change some negative perceptions of Nigerians to plane crashes. Hence, the need to employ crisis communication strategies to clarify these rumours.

However, beyond the most frequently employed crisis communication strategies, the study also found other strategies such as ingratiation, victimge, confirmation, apology, reminder, and justification. These crisis communication strategies, combined with the mostly employed strategies, assisted Dana Air in having a robust response to the crisis. These strategies are further discussed.

The **ingratiation strategy** was employed eight (8) times to praise and thank the organisation's stakeholders. Dana Air employed the ingratiation strategy to appreciate relevant stakeholders who stood by them during that incident. For instance, Dana Air appreciated the aviation authorities who worked tirelessly to unravel the cause(s) of the accident. "We are grateful for the progress made by the aviation authorities towards determining the cause of the unfortunate accident (*see Appendix 3*). Also, other critical stakeholder groups, including the Nigerian President, the Aviation minister, and the then governor of Lagos State, were appreciated for their support. "We are grateful to his Excellency, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, President, and Commander-in-Chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Honourable Minister of Aviation, Princess Stella Oduah, the Executive Governor of Lagos State, Dr. Babatunde Raji Fashola for their

exemplary leadership during this dark moment in the life of our great nation” (see Appendix 3).

Furthermore, Dana Air also appreciated the support of all Nigerians during the dark moment and requested prayers for the organisation and families of the bereaved (see Appendix 4). Other critical stakeholder groups were also appreciated for their support and professionalism in handling issues. Appreciation was expressed, for example, to the Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB), the Ministry of Aviation, and the National Assembly's Aviation Joint Committee (see Appendix 19).

Another strategy employed by Dana Air was the **victimage strategy**, used six (6) times. The victimage strategy, according to Coombs (2007), presents an organisation in crisis as a victim of the crisis also. This is done to reduce the attributions of crisis responsibility. The first victimage employed by Dana Air was given during a media statement by the CEO on the recovery of the black box by the search teams. According to Jacky Hathiramani, the organisation also lost some of their “finest and most dedicated staff” wished for by any organisation (see Appendix 3). Thus, Dana Air also played the victim since it also lost its crew members.

While employing the victimage tactics, Dana Air provided instructing information to help stakeholders make sense of the tragic incident. They provided a list of those whose lives were lost during the sad incident, including their Flight Engineer and crew members on board the ill-fated aircraft (*see Appendix 3*). Thus, it was expected that stakeholders’ attributions of Dana Air being directly responsible for the plane crash would be reduced. In addition, at a press conference led by the CEO on Thursday, June 7, 2012, he employed the victimage tactics in an emotion-laden voice by further mentioning the names of the staff that lost their lives during the tragic incident. “Captain Peter Waxton, First Officer, Mahendra Rathore, Jane, Uche, Onyi and Eke we all knew them so well” (see Appendix 7). Finally, Dana Air placed a full-page Guardian newspaper commiserative message in honour of its staff members whose lives were cut short in the tragic incident. The condolence message had the attached pictures of each crew member lost in the incident, which read, “ANGELS IN THE SKY. You served humanity and flew with pride. You will forever be missed. Dana Air Management & Staff” (see Appendix 13).

Another crisis communication strategy was the **confirmation strategy**, employed three (3) times. The confirmation strategy in this study refers to acts that strengthen an already established truth by providing an authoritative statement. As part of confirmation tactics, Dana Air provided instructive and adjusting information to reinforce their credibility further. The first confirmation tactic was used when the organisation confirmed the recovery of the voice recorder and black box of the crashed aircraft. Dana Air had earlier promised stakeholders to keep them updated as information got to them. Thus, as soon as a team from the government regulatory agencies, from the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), and Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB), recovered the black box, Dana Air released a statement (see Appendix 3) to confirm and strengthen the truth on the recoveries. Another confirmation tactic showed Dana Air confirming that it would partner with some government agencies to provide succour to individuals displaced from the tragic incident (see Appendix 12).

Furthermore, the **justification strategy** was employed by Dana Air once to provide a defence or an explanation aimed at reducing the perceived crises damages. Coombs (2007) suggests that justification tactics should be employed when crisis managers seek to minimize the perceived damage(s) resulting from a crisis. The CEO, Jacky Hathiramani, employed the justification tactic while disclosing that the crashed aircraft's age was not a probable cause of the crash. Hathiramani stated this during a press conference held on Friday, June 8, 2012 (see appendix 7).

The brand of airplane as you know was an MD-80 there are nearly 900 of these flying currently internationally. More than half of them are owned and operated by American Airlines and Delta Airlines. In fact their average age of their fleet of those aircrafts are even more than ours and even the age of our fleet is not considered to be any short because even within the country here you have airlines flying even more than the age of this aircraft. (Dana Air Press Conference, Lagos, June 8, 2012)

The statement credited to Hathiramani aimed to reduce the perceived damage(s) caused by the crisis by revealing that other aircraft operated by other airlines were even older than the crashed aircraft. He further substantiated his claims by disclosing that all their aircraft were regularly maintained, and the crash could not have resulted from the plane's age. Thus, the publics are expected to take their minds off the idea that the age of the aircraft caused the crash since other aircraft that are older than the



crashed one were still in operation locally and internationally. Hence, Hathiramani justified the reason for still flying the aircraft within the age bracket.

Dana Air also employed the **apology crisis communication strategy** once. The airlines' chairman, Ramesh Hathiramani, apologised during a meeting with the bereaved families assembled at the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital, Ikeja morgue. His statement at the meeting (see appendix 4) showed that he accepted responsibility for the situation as the team's leader and apologized to the victims' families. "When you do have a fatality, it is your responsibility to step up to the plate," Ramesh said.

Finally, Dana Air employed the **reminder strategy** once. In employing the reminder strategy, Dana Air reminded the public of its reputation in the Nigerian Aviation industry as it sought to become Nigeria's leading airline. Dana Air reminded the public about when they began flying, the number of flights they had operated, and the number of passengers they had carried so far.

Research question two examined the mostly employed and effective crisis communication strategies used by Dana Air in managing the June 2012 plane crash crisis. The findings revealed that out of the ten (10) crisis communication strategies employed by Dana Air, four of these ten crisis communication strategies were mostly used. These four mostly employed crisis communication strategies include the constant provision of (updated) information occurring thirty-eight (38) times; commitment/assurance strategies employed twenty-one (21) times; compensation strategies used nineteen (19) times; and communicating with empathy and compassion employed eighteen (18) times.

The study further sought to examine the extent of correlation of Dana Air's crisis communication strategies with the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) recommendations. The findings are presented in research question three.

**4.1.3 Research Question Three:** To what extent did Dana Air's crisis communication strategies correlate with the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) recommendations?

Research question three sought to examine the suitability of applying the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) recommendations to the communication response strategies of Dana Air. The SCCT presents guidelines for crisis managers to respond to crises that threaten their organisations' reputations. The SCCT has also been found suitable in various crisis types, including plane crash crises, conducted in almost all the continents, with little empirical evidence from Nigeria. Hence, this study sought to test the suitability of applying the SCCT guidelines on a Nigerian crisis case, as findings suggest refining the theory from a Nigerian crisis perspective.

Therefore, to examine the recommendations provided by the SCCT, an attempt is made to match the crisis type with crisis response strategies. Thus, in answering research question three, an attempt was first made to classify the Dana Air crisis according to its suitable type, after which an in-depth examination of its strategies are juxtaposed with the guidelines of the SCCT to determine its appropriateness. It is interesting to note that there is a dearth of Nigerian crisis cases that have been framed by the SCCT. Thus, the study's findings will have implications for the development and application of the SCCT, thereby ensuring the theory has global representativeness.

As Coombs (2007) proposed, organisations in crisis must first recognise the crisis type to determine the appropriateness of SCCT strategies. The knowledge of the crisis type will determine the most appropriate crisis response strategies to employ in protecting their reputation. Determining the type of crisis is also necessary as stakeholders' perceptions are centered on their understanding of the type of crisis, their capacity to demonstrate that the crisis occurred, and their knowledge of the organisation's past crisis history, relationship, and behaviours with other stakeholders.

The SCCT recommends that organisations choose crisis response tactics based on their perceived level of crisis responsibility after determining the type of crisis. In other words, crisis response strategies must be consistent with crisis responsibility beliefs. For example, in the victim cluster crisis, where organisations are crisis victims, there are minimal attributions of crisis responsibility with minimal reputational threats. For

accidental cluster crises, the organisational actions that led to the crises are unintentional. . As a result, attributions of crisis responsibility are limited, and reputational risks are moderate. In the case of the preventable cluster, however, organisations intentionally put victims in danger and took inappropriate acts. As a result, substantial attributions of crisis blame exist, posing serious reputational risks.

Therefore, to determine the type of crisis Dana Air faced, reference is made to the corporate response materials employed in managing the crisis, as found in chapter one. The crisis response strategies would identify the type of crisis either implicitly or explicitly. Table 4.4 presents the data of findings:

**Table 4.4: Categorisation of Dana Air by Crisis Type**

Categories	Unit of Analysis					
Type of crisis	Press releases (3)	Media statement (16)	Press Conferences (4 videos)	Newspaper Reports (Guardian and Punch) Reports (36)	AIB Report (1)	ACG Report (1)
Technical error accident (Accidental Cluster)	None	None	Yes	Dual Engine failure	None	None
Human error accident (Preventable cluster)	None	None	Yes	Preventable	Yes	Yes
Both technical and human error (both accidental and preventable)	None	None	None	Yes	Yes	Yes
No accident type mentioned	Yes	Yes	Yes	None	None	None

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2020**

The findings from Table 4.4 reveal that Dana Air did not mention any crisis type in its narrative of the incident. Rather, Dana Air consistently revealed that they did not know the cause of the plane crash. Nonetheless, from a closer look at all the strategies from the response materials that emanated from Dana Air with those of the SCCT, it could be implied that Dana Air categorized the incident under the accidental cluster. The accidental cluster crises arise as a result of organisational actions that were unintentional (Coombs 2007). There are usually lesser attributions of crisis responsibility and moderate reputational threat. A statement from Capt Wason further justifies the accident cluster crisis. Capt. Wason had said that “the only way that aircraft could have crashed is if it lost both engines. They are speculations. At this point in time, we don’t even know” <sic>. Hence, he speculated that the crash must have resulted from a technical error.

Through its crisis communication strategies, Dana Air presented a crisis narration that revealed an unintentional act. They consistently described the incident (plane crash) as a **fatal accident, tragic accident, air mishap, and unfortunate incident**. They buttressed this view in their use of the justification and victimage strategies by providing reasons for flying the aircraft, which, according to them, was duly maintained. In addition, they also presented themselves as victims of the crisis since they lost crew members and an engineer in the crash, thereby implying that it was an unintentional act. The narrative of an unintentional act could possibly have gone down well with stakeholders since the Airline consistently claimed that the aircraft was in good condition before flying and because members of staff of the Airline were also involved in the crash. Despite providing justification and victimage strategies, Dana Air apologised, provided compensation, further reminded stakeholders of past good deeds, and praised several stakeholder groups for standing by them during such a trying time. These strategies were employed to show that the crisis was an accident and unintentional.

On the contrary, however, the findings from stakeholder reports and analysis of the incident as found in the Guardian and Punch newspapers and official reports from AIB revealed that the crisis type was preventable. In other words, the crisis fell under the preventable crisis cluster of the SCCT. In the preventable crisis cluster, organisations knowingly place stakeholders at risk by taking inappropriate actions or violating laws

or regulations (Coombs 2007). Findings from newspaper reports clearly indicted Dana Air as culpable for the crash.

In one of the reports from an aviation expert who spoke with the Guardian newspaper during the crash week, he accused Dana Air's management and aviation regulators of their negligence of duties. According to the expert, who could not be named due to ethical issues, for an incident "caused by engine failure, two engines for that matter called for concern. The crash showed probable likely negligence on the operator and the regulators" (Ezeokoli, 2012:13). While further indicting Dana Air, the expert explained that although the aircraft was 22 years old, its age was not an issue if it adequately followed the maintenance manual and schedule. "...the older an aircraft, the more expensive it is to maintain. And knowing the challenges airlines have been facing with operation costs worldwide, and Nigeria especially, there's cause for concern" (Guardian newspaper, June 9, 2012:13).

The analysis by the expert speaks against the justification strategy employed by Dana Air. The management of Dana Air had tried to justify its use of the brand and model of the crashed aircraft. CEO Hathiramani had disclosed during a press conference that there were currently nearly 900 of the MD-80 brand of aircraft flying internationally. "...average age of the fleet of those aircraft are even more than ours and even the age of our fleet is not considered to be any short because even within the country here, you have airlines flying even more than the age of this aircraft." Nonetheless, while the expert analysis agreed that the age of the crashed aircraft was not an issue, it became an issue if the aircraft was well managed. Thus, this implied that the crashed aircraft was not well maintained, even when Dana Air and regulatory agencies certified the aircraft fit to fly.

In a similar analysis on the engine of the crashed aircraft by another stakeholder, there were revelations that something was wrong with the crashed aircraft as it was almost rare for an aircraft to lose two engines within a short period:

This has left a lot to be desired. There is something fundamentally wrong with the aircraft for it to lose two engines on such a short flight. We hope that the Black Boxes reveal much more about why this happened (Guardian newspaper Sunday, June 10, 2012: 55).

Again, it was revealed that something was suspicious in the aircraft losing two engines within the short flight. The stakeholder further resorted to revelations from the black box to determine the real cause of the crash. Thus, maintenance issues were also highlighted as it was implied that thorough checks were not carried out. If it was, the faulty engines might have been detected.

Furthermore, a senior official in the Technical Department of the Ministry of Aviation, while indicting the pilot for the crash, revealed to the Guardian newspaper correspondent that the pilot displayed unprofessional conduct by not reporting (sending) early warning signals while taking off:

There is no doubt that the plane lost one of its two engines soon after take-off, but given his many years of experience, the pilot thought he could manage to complete the estimated 50-minute flight to Lagos. But if he had sent an alert signal on take-off, he could have been asked to return to base...still, he had another opportunity of reporting any fault to the Minna airport, but he did not, again. He flew to Ibadan by Ibadan Airport for possible emergency landing, had he reported any problem, he didn't. (Guardian newspaper Sunday, June 10, 2012: 56):

In further indicting the pilot, the stakeholder revealed that it was extremely late when the pilot (now deceased) called for help through the MayDay signal. It was reported that the pilot was close to the Lagos Airport when he sent a distress call, at a time when the gears and throttle had already packed up.

It was when he entered the Lagos airspace, within about 11 and 12 nautical miles, that he sent what can now be termed the first distress call – MayDay signal...around Ibafo and Iju, he demanded clearance of the tarmac, specifically RunWay 18 Right, meant for international flights instead of 18 left and this was obliged him...but apparently, the throttle and the gears all packed up at the same time, despite the fact that the plane was almost gliding in for landing, as indicated in the radar (Guardian newspaper, Sunday, June 10, 2012: 56).

These reports from experts clearly indicted Dana Air and the relevant aviation regulatory agencies. Thus, the plane crash may have been prevented if due diligence and maintenance were duly carried out and if the pilot had acted professionally. To further corroborate the analyses from the experts, the findings from the final Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB) Report on the plane crash was released five years after the crash happened and indicted the management of Dana Air. The AIB, in collaboration

with officials from Dana Air, engine manufacturers Pratt and Whitney, and several other aviation experts, were involved in investigations to unravel the cause(s) of the crash. The AIB Report (2017) findings revealed probable factors such as the loss of engine power and error in the routine checklist and the pilot's unprofessional attitude in landing the aircraft in the nearest airfield. Thus, the findings from the AIB Report put to rest the issues that surrounded the probable causes of the crash. Therefore, it could be inferred that the findings from AIB and those of experts aligned towards a preventable crisis cluster type.

The SCCT recommends a strategic communicative response to protect organisational response by assessing the crisis and selecting a response strategy that fits the crisis. That is, the type of crisis should influence the choice of a crisis response strategy. This further implies that the type of crisis – victim, accidental, and preventable- should be matched with denial, diminishing, and rebuilding strategies. Thus, Coombs (2007) proposed guidelines to guide organisations when faced with any crisis (see Table 2.3).

Since it had been established that the Dana Air crisis was a preventable one with strong attributions of crisis responsibilities, the SCCT thus, recommended the use of the rebuild crisis response strategies, regardless of crisis history or prior relationship reputation (Coombs 2007). By implication, it did not matter if Dana Air had experienced or not experienced a similar crisis in the past or had built or not built a prior relationship with stakeholders. The rebuilding strategies were the most appropriate for the crisis.

The rebuild crisis response strategies are the core pathways for creating new reputational assets. These strategies “attempt to improve the organisation’s reputation by offering material and or symbolic forms of aid to victims” (Coombs 2007: 172). Thus, *offering compensation* and *apologizing* are tactics of the rebuild strategy, which are pathways to rebuilding the reputational assets. SCCT further recommends using secondary (Bolstering) response strategies as supplements to the rebuild strategies. A closer look at the strategies employed by Dana Air in responding to the plane crash crisis (see Table 4.2) revealed that, indeed, Dana Air employed compensation and apology tactics. The apology tactic was employed once, while the compensation tactics were used thirteen (13) times. Table 4.5 summarizes the reputational threats presented by the crisis, recommendations of the SCCT, and Dana Air’s response to the crisis.



**Table 4.5: Summary of Reputational Threat, SCCT Recommendations, and Dana Air’s Response**

<b>Crisis Case</b>	<b>Reputational Threat of crisis</b>	<b>SCCT Recommendations</b>	<b>Dana Air Responses</b>
Dana Air flight 9J-922 crash	Strong attributions of crisis responsibility leading to severe reputational threats	Rebuild strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compensation</li> <li>• Apology</li> </ul> Bolstering Strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reminder</li> <li>• Ingratiation</li> </ul>	Diminish Strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Justification</li> </ul> Rebuild strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compensation</li> <li>• Apology</li> </ul> Bolstering Strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reminder</li> <li>• Ingratiation</li> <li>• Victimage</li> </ul>

**Source: Researcher’s fieldwork, 2020**

The data from Table 4.5 reveal that Dana Air employed the justification tactics of the diminish strategy, compensation and apology tactics of the rebuild strategies, and reminder, ingratiation, and victimage tactics of the bolstering strategies. The diminish crisis response strategies are employed when Crisis managers want stakeholders to feel that a crisis is not quite as serious as they think it is, or that the organisation did not handle it well. In addition, rebuild crisis response strategies aim to improve an organisation's reputation by providing victims with relief items or financial or non-financial aid. The bolstering strategy is used to inform (remind) stakeholders about past good works of the organisation; ingratiation is done by appreciating stakeholders (ingratiation), reminding them of past good deeds of the organisation (reminder), while the victimage strategy presents the organisation also as a victim of the crisis.

Therefore, were Dana Air's strategies in line with recommendations by the SCCT? Findings reveal similarities in the strategies employed by Dana Air and the recommendations of the SCCT. For instance, the SCCT recommends the use of the rebuild strategies with compensation and apology tactics. These strategies are evident in Dana Air's response, even though the apology tactic was employed once. The SCCT further recommends the bolstering strategies of reminder and ingratiation. Dana Air's strategies revealed the use of reminder and ingratiation. However, Dana Air added the victimage tactics of the bolstering strategies. It could mean that they were consistently pushing the narrative that they were also victims of the crash.

The findings from Table 4.5 further revealed the justification tactics of the diminish strategies. This strategy is not part of the guidelines recommended by the SCCT because preventable crisis clusters clearly indicate that the organisation engaged in activities that led to the crisis, which may have been prevented. Thus, by employing the justification tactics, Dana Air attempted to defend the reasons for its actions. CEO Hathiramani had justified the use of aircraft over twenty-two (22) years, adding that similar models of the crashed aircraft were still flying the Nigerian airspace and the world at large. Hence, the age of the aircraft could not have contributed to its crash. Nonetheless, it could be inferred that Dana Air's response strategies were consistent with the recommendations of the SCCT to a great extent. The consistency is seen in Dana Air's use of all the recommended strategies of the SCCT and included more (cultural peculiarities to the Nigerian context) to achieve their aims.

**4.1.4 Research Question Four:** What strategies did Dana Air employ in rebuilding its relationship with stakeholders after the crisis?

Research question four sought to examine Dana Air's management strategies in rebuilding relationships with stakeholders after the plane crash. Therefore, to investigate this research question, the study examined the strategies found in the response materials from Dana Air's response to the crisis and reactions from key informant interviews.

The Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) provides strategies that organisations in crisis can use to protect their reputation and rebuild stakeholder trust. As Coombs (2007) observed, the rebuilding strategies of the SCCT aim to improve the organisation's reputation as a reputation is an asset that is likely to be damaged during a crisis. Thus, organisations say and do (action) things to cushion the effect, especially the negative effects of crises.

Offering compensation to victims and or families of victims affected by crisis and apologizing for crisis acts are tactics of the rebuild strategy of the SCCT. As presented in Table 4.2, Dana Air employed apology and compensation tactics to families of the dead and the injured victims. While the apology tactic was used once, the compensation tactic was employed nineteen (19) times. Also, Dana Air employed compensation tactics to show its focus on protecting and rebuilding its reputation after the plane crash.

The apology tactic was used once in a statement by the Chairman of Dana Air, Ramesh Hathiramani when he visited the deceased's family members at the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH) morgue. He subtly apologized for the act and took responsibility by stating that the management of Dana Air would take up all responsibilities as required by law, "When you do have a fatality, it is your responsibility to step up to the plate" (see Appendix 4). Apologizing to the families of the deceased and offering to be responsible for all necessary requirements according to the law could reveal the incident as accidental and unintentional, thereby presenting Dana Air as a responsible organisation. On the contrary, however, apologising for crisis acts could sometimes lead to further litigations if the organisation was found to have been culpable in the actions that led to the crisis.

Furthermore, compensations are legitimate rights of victims of crises, especially in preventable cluster crises. Dana Air consistently offered compensation in almost all its communication content to the stakeholders. The CEO of the organisation, Jacky Hathiramani, in a statement during a press conference on June 12, 2012, mentioned that Dana Air would compensate the families of the dead and injured victims in every way possible. He further noted that although no amount of compensation could replace the deceased victims and the pains of losing loved ones, the organisation would strive to reduce these pains by fulfilling its obligations as required by the law. This statement (see Appendix 7) further hinted that Dana Air's insurers were advanced in plans to commence the payment of compensations to the victims' families.

For the families of the dead victims, there were necessary procedures and protocols according to the international law and aviation standards, which were needed before they would be compensated. For instance, the international law stipulated that “the sum of thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000 or N4.6 million) be paid to the families of each victim within the first thirty (30) days of the incident while a final settlement of \$100,000 (N15 million) would be paid later to each family after completing necessary requirements by the law” (Guardian newspaper, June 7, 2012: 2). To this end, the management of Dana Air showed complete knowledge of the requirements by international law (International Civil Aviation Organisation) and expressed willingness to pay compensation to families of the dead victims involved in the crash (*see Appendix 23*).

To further show its commitment towards paying compensation to families of the dead victims, Dana Air released series of messages calling on family members of the deceased victims to come forward with details of their next-of-kin for insurance claims purposes (see Appendices 20 and 23). The notice, which was first released on Thursday, June 14, 2012, became a daily occurrence in the communication materials sent out to stakeholders, especially to families of the dead victims. Furthermore, Dana Air gave constant updated compensation plans and information to stakeholders. Compensation information included the number of direct contacts made with families and embassies (for foreign victims) and the number of submitted completed insurance forms. For instance, the last media statement released by the organisation on 28 June 2012 (see Appendix 22 and 23) revealed the number of direct contacts made with 119

out of the 120 families of the dead victims and nine (9) embassies for victims from other countries.

For the injured victims, on the other hand, relief materials were promised and adequately delivered. In addition, the management of Dana Air also provided counselling and psychotherapy services for families of the dead and injured. The deaths of loved ones during crises are often traumatic periods for organisations in crisis and family members of the deceased. Hence, to assist parties involved in getting through the mental and emotional trauma, Dana Air offered the services of counsellors and psychotherapists.

The management of Dana Air kept to its compensation promises to injured victims by donating relief materials, such as blankets, clothes, mattresses, kitchen utensils, food items, among others,” to take care of their immediate needs. A Director of the Airline, Gautam Hathiramani, while donating the materials stated that the compensation exercise was a continuous one adding that further arrangements were in place to provide accommodation and replace property lost during the incident. The organisation further promised that all injured victims would receive continuous compensation until they were fully recovered to live normal lives and additionally offered to offset all medical bills of the four patients that suffered varying degrees of burns and injuries from the incident (see Appendix 20)

Apart from the apology and compensation tactics of the SCCT, Dana Air also employed other rebuilding strategies to improve its reputation with stakeholders. For instance, the empathy/compassion and the commitment/assurance strategies were also rebuilding strategies employed by Dana Air to improve their reputation. Empathy or compassion strategies present Dana Air as empathetic and showing compassion to the incident and families of the dead and injured. As earlier noted, organisations seek to rebuild their reputation during and after a crisis by saying and doing certain things. By taking actions that show concern about the entire incident and its outcome, Dana Air endeared itself into stakeholders' hearts by putting the concerns of the dead and injured victims first.

The management of Dana Air consistently showed concern and attempted to rebuild their relationship with stakeholders through commitment/assurance strategies. They always committed themselves to continuous support for the families of the victims and

the injured throughout the entire incident. Empathy/compassion actions are revealed in Dana Air's use of statements such as "we will continue to do our best to assist them in every way possible..." "...the airline would do everything possible to ensure that your concerns are handled..." "we will continue to offer our full support while the investigations last..." "we will ensure that all who have lost their properties in the unfortunate incident get their dues..." These efforts are geared towards positioning Dana Air as a responsible organisation committed to the plight of crisis victims.

Furthermore, in a key informant interview with one of the team members, Key Informant Participant F, the management of Dana Air embarked on several measures to rebuild their relationship with stakeholders at that time.

I recall that we were all asked not to grant interviews about the crash because management did not want the issue to escalate as it was a grieving period further. Also, compensation was paid to the families of the deceased victims and those who were hospitalised. I think, when the ban was lifted, management reduced the airfare to get the customers back. (Key Informant Participant F, Lagos, December 2020).

The findings from the key informant interview and those from the content analysed data are in sync with each other. The management of Dana Air paid compensation to families of the dead victims while those injured and hospitalised were adequately taken care of till they were discharged from the hospital. Also, Dana Air ensured that it kept to all promises made during the crises. "Another critical thing we sought to achieve was in fulfilling all the promises made during the crisis. For example, we made sure that we processed all compensations and kept updating the public on progress made..." Key Informant Participant E added.

Also, Dana Air employed massive use of keeping the public abreast of information at every point. The opinions of some stakeholders revealed that Dana Air frequently updated stakeholders with the necessary information of the organisation's efforts at ensuring that similar incidents would not be repeated in the nearest future. For instance, Dana Air revealed a strict adherence to safety precautions and information on its aircraft certification. "...to show that Dana was concerned about its stakeholders and regain the trust of stakeholders, there was a massive campaign that revealed all the necessary precautionary measures taken by the airline including the servicing and certification of the aircraft..." (Participant E, Ibadan, 17th January, 2021).

To buttress the earlier opinions of the Key Informant Participant E, another interviewee, Key Informant Participant B, revealed that Dana Air maintained public enlightenment with critical stakeholders through the media.

It engaged in public enlightenment with write-ups, news commentaries, radio and television appearances by industry experts on the issue. Also, the engagement with the media and other critical stakeholders was the winning streak. (Key Informant Participant B, Male, Lagos, 7th June, 2021).

As earlier stated, the rebuilding strategies are done in an attempt to improve the overall organisational reputation. Findings revealed that Dana Air first took responsibility for the incident by apologizing and paying compensation to families of the dead victims and injured. In addition, Dana Air ensured to follow up on all promises made during the crisis and provided necessary information to the public. These gestures may have proven effective as the number of passengers flying Dana Air has increased over the years. Interestingly, this study further sampled the opinions of selected stakeholders to understand their perceptions of the reputation of Dana Air. The findings are presented in research question five (5).

**4.1.5 Research Question Five:** How did the crisis communication strategies influence stakeholder perceptions of Dana Air's reputation?

Research question five examines how Dana Air's crisis communication strategies influenced the way stakeholders perceive their reputation during and after the crisis. To determine this objective, the crisis communication strategies found in the qualitative data (from content analysis and key informant interviews) are used to generate quantitative data. The analysis of this research question is divided into three sections. First, a stakeholder mapping is done to identify the stakeholders of Dana Air. Second, the available opinions of selected expert stakeholders on the airline's reputation, gathered from primary and secondary data after the plane crash, are discussed. Finally, the perception of stakeholders of Dana Air's reputation is analysed. The data from Table 4.6 reveal the mapping of Dana Air stakeholders.

#### **4.1.5.1 Analysis of Dana Air's Stakeholders**

Dana Air stakeholders have been divided into primary and secondary groups. The primary stakeholders include the government through the Ministry of Aviation, regulatory agencies such as the National Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Nigerian Airspace and Maritime Agency (NAMA), employees of Dana Air, passengers, suppliers, among others. Secondary stakeholders include the media, other airline organisations in Nigeria (competitors), and special interest groups. Table 4.6 presents the summary of Dana Air stakeholder mapping



**Table 4.6: Dana Air Stakeholder Mapping**

Type of stakeholder	Stakeholder Group
Primary	Investors Ministry of Aviation NCAA, FAAN, NEMA, NACA Employees AIB Customers Suppliers
Secondary	Media, Unions Non-government organisations (NGO's) Special interest groups Competitors
Additional stakeholders	Injured victims and families of the deceased victims on board the crashed plane  NTSB

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2020**

These stakeholders are responsible for the frequent operations of Dana Air. Stakeholders can influence and be affected by the organisation's actions, as well as provide feedback on Dana Air's operations. Having examined the stakeholder mapping of Dana Air, the study further investigates experts' views on the causes and attributions of crisis responsibility. The opinions of knowledgeable stakeholders are selected for discussion.

One of the major focuses of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) is its ability to assist in the protection of the reputation of organisations during and after crises. By analysing crises, crisis managers can choose appropriate strategies to respond to crises to protect organisational reputation. Therefore, the SCCT offers three factors that can assist in shaping reputational threats. These factors are (1) initial crisis responsibility, (2) crisis history, and (3) prior relational reputation. To protect organisational reputation, crisis managers must assess stakeholder's attributions of crisis responsibility, assess its crisis history, and prior relational relationships with stakeholders.

The analysis of stakeholders' perceptions of crisis responsibility after the Dana Air plane crash from secondary data revealed that Dana Air was responsible for the crash. In other words, the crash would have been avoided if Dana Air had taken relevant precautionary measures. Thus, events that led to the crash were preventable. For instance, while commenting on the plane crash during the week of the crash, an aviation expert stated that Dana Air and relevant regulatory agencies were to blame for the crash. "For an incidence caused by engine failure, two engines for that matter called for concern. The crash showed probable likely negligence on the operator and the regulators" (Ezeokoli, 2012: 13).

Furthermore, another stakeholder blamed Dana Air for not checking the crashed aircraft properly to have lost two engines on a short flight. According to the stakeholder, "there is something fundamentally wrong with the aircraft for it to lose two engines on such a short flight" (Eke, 2012). In this statement, Dana Air was indicted for failing to conduct necessary checks on the crashed aircraft.

In addition, another stakeholder in the aviation industry also indicted Dana Air and the late pilot for complicity in the crashed aircraft. According to the stakeholder, the late pilot acted unprofessionally and could have prevented the plane crash:

There is no doubt that the plane lost one of its two engines soon after take-off, but given his many years of experience, the pilot thought he could manage to complete the estimated 50-minute flight to Lagos. But if he had sent an alert signal on take-off, he could have been asked to return to base...still, he had another opportunity of reporting any fault to the Minna airport, but he did not, again. He flew to Ibadan by Ibadan Airport for possible emergency landing, had he reported any problem, he didn't. "It was when he entered the Lagos airspace, within about 11 and 12 nautical miles, that he sent what can now be termed the first distress call – MayDay signal...around Ibafo and Iju, he demanded clearance of the tarmac, specifically RunWay 18 Right, meant for international flights instead of 18 left and this was obliged him...but apparently, the throttle and the gears all packed up at the same time, despite the fact that the plane was almost gliding in for landing, as indicated in the radar (Guardian newspaper, Sunday, June 10, 2012: 56).

The statement from the aviation expert fully indicted Dana Air and the late pilot. The pilot was accused of acting unprofessionally and could have landed the plane at the nearest airfield. Conversely, the expert blamed Dana Air for the unprofessional conduct of the late pilot.

Finally, after relevant authorities conducted investigations, the Final Report of the Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB) also indicted Dana Air as responsible for the plane crash. The report revealed that there was "loss of engine power number 1 seventeen minutes into the fight, and thereafter on final approach, Engine number 2 lost power and failed to respond to throttle movement on demand for increased power to sustain the aircraft in its flight configuration" (AIB Report, 2017:3). For both engines to lose power mid-air implied a faulty aircraft. It also shows that the regular checks required of aircraft were not properly conducted. Furthermore, other factors responsible for the plane crash according to the AIB Report were, "the inappropriate omission of the use of the Checklist, and the crew's inability to appreciate the severity of the power-related problem, and their subsequent failure to land at the nearest suitable airfield, lack of situation awareness, inappropriate decision making, and poor airmanship" (AIB Report, 2017:3). These factors have been attributed to the unprofessional conduct of the late Dana Air pilot. These expert stakeholder responses reveal that Dana Air was culpable in the plane crash. Therefore, expert stakeholders indicted Dana Air as partly responsible for the plane crash. Therefore, reputational perception during the crash would be negative.

Next, we examine the prior crisis history of Dana Air. Findings from reports from web archives, Dana Air website, and online sources revealed that before the June 3, 2012 plane crash, Dana Air had recorded no known crisis since it commenced flight operations on 10th November 2008. However, there were reports of a malfunction with one of their aircraft. The supposed malfunction led to the uproar after this crash, as there were rumours that it was the same aircraft that had malfunctioned two weeks before the crash. Refuting this claim, the Director of Flight Operations disclosed that they were different aircraft. Thus, this implies that Dana Air had an almost clean crisis history before the plane crash. Therefore, for crisis history, Dana Air would have a positive reputation. Meer et al. (2017) reiterated that prior organisation-stakeholder relationships before a crisis could reduce the perceived reputational threats or negative perceptions. Sometimes, the inability to determine prior organisational reputation before a crisis has been identified as a flaw of the SCCT. Nonetheless, it could be said that expert stakeholders held Dana Air culpable for the crisis, thereby having a negative reputation of the organisation. In contrast, Dana Air had an almost clean crisis history before the crash, which could translate into having a relatively positive reputation.

Despite the preceding, this study further examined the perceptions held by passengers towards Dana Air's reputation, especially seven years after the plane crash. Organisational reputation has been described as an intangible asset. These perceptions are developed or formed based on stakeholders' interactions or through mediated contact with the services provided by such organisations. Thus, the perceptions held by stakeholders would influence their behaviour, attitude, and interactions with such organisations. For this study, reputational measures were divided into financial and social aspects.

While it was almost impossible to seek passengers' opinions on the financial aspects of Dana Air's reputation characterised by dividend payment, investment value, and consistent profit/loss performance, the researcher opted out for the social aspects. Therefore, respondents were required to provide opinions on the following social aspects - the quality of service, effective communication, customer satisfaction, emotional appeal, innovativeness, corporate social responsibility, and quality of management.

Thus, a survey, through a structured online questionnaire, was administered to passengers of Dana Air aimed at examining their perception of Dana Air's reputation. It is worthy to note that participation in this study was voluntary and based on the informed consent of the participants. Respondents who eventually participated in the survey indicated their willingness to participate after the objectives and any known risks were made known to them. Hence, the first page of the survey required the consent of participants before participating in the online survey. A total of 42 respondents willingly participated in the survey. The findings are presented in Tables 4.8 – 4.12. Table 4.7 presents the demographic data of the survey respondents:

**Table 4.7: Summary of Demographic Distribution of Respondents**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	22	52.4%
	Female	20	47.6%
		<b>42</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Age Range</b>	20 – 29 years	19	45.2%
	30 – 39 years	7	16.7%
	40 – 49 years	8	19%
	50 – 59 years	6	14.3%
	60 – 69 years	2	4.8%
	70 – 79 years	0	0%
	80 – 89 years	0	0%
	90 years and above	0	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>42</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Researcher’s fieldwork, 2020**

Data from Table 4.7 reveal that 22 (52.4%) are male respondents while 20 (47.6%) are female respondents. Thus, the opinions of male and female passengers are highly represented. The study strongly encouraged the participation of female respondents. Furthermore, findings reveal that 19 (45.2%) respondents are within the age range of 20 – 29 years, 7 (16.7%) respondents are within the age range of 30 – 49 years while 8 (19%) respondents are within the age range of 40 – 49 years. Furthermore, 6 (14.3%) respondents are within the age range of 50 – 59 years while 2 (4.8%) respondents are 60 – 69 years. However, there was no respondent from the ages of 70 and above. Findings, thus, imply that respondents for this study are within 20 – 69 years. They are also considered knowledgeable to respond to the questions raised for this study.

The data from Table 4.7 further reveal an array of occupational distribution of respondents. The data reveal that there are lawyers (2), lecturers (3), travel consultants (4), writer (1), student (2), creative artist (1), banking (5), self-employed (5), clergy (1), PR expert/consultants (5), medical lab scientist (1), doctor (2), nursing (3), Retiree (2), Civil servant (2) and those involved in businesses (3).

After analyzing the socio-demographic data of respondents, the study further examined their opinions to the various measurements of Dana Air's reputation. The findings are presented in Tables 4.8 to 4.11.

**Table 4.8: Respondents Opinions on the Quality of service of Dana Air**

S/N	Statement	SA	A	SD	D	U	Total
<b>A</b>	<b>Quality of Services</b>						
1.	Dana Air offers quality services	6 (14.3%)	32 (76.2%)	0	2 (4.8%)	2 (4.8%)	42 (100%)
2.	Dana Air understands customer needs	2 (4.8%)	28 (66.7%)	2 (4.8%)	4 (9.5%)	6 (14.3%)	42
3.	Dana Air promptly attends to my inquiries	4 (9.5%)	20 (47.6%)	2 (4.8%)	12 (28.6%)	4 (9.5%)	42
4.	Dana Air is concerned about the safety of passengers	4 (9.5%)	30 (71.4%)	2 (4.8%)	2 (4.8%)	4 (9.5%)	42
5.	Dana Air offers the most attractive aviation conditions	6 (14.3%)	10 (23.8%)	8 (19%)	14 (33.3%)	4 (9.5%)	42

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2020**



The data from Table 4.8 presents respondents' opinions on the quality of services received from Dana Air. The data reveals that most of 38 (90.5%) respondents believe that Dana Air offers quality services, while 2 (4.8%) respondents disagree and are undecided, respectively. Thus, the findings imply that more passengers of Dana Air believe that the organisation offers quality services. Furthermore, respondents believe that Dana Air understands customer needs. The belief is reflected in the responses of 30 (71.5%) respondents, while 6 (14.3%) respondents each disagree and are undecided, respectively. Also, findings reveal that 24 (%) agree that Dana Air promptly attends to their enquires while 14 (%) respondents disagree and another 4 (9.5%) respondents are undecided. Findings, thus, imply that more respondents believe that Dana Air promptly responds to their inquiries.

The findings from Table 4.8 further reveal that 34 (80.9%) respondents believe and agree that Dana Air is concerned about passengers' safety, while 4 (9.5%) respondents each disagree and are undecided. The data thus, implies that respondents believe that Dana Air is concerned about their safety while flying. Finally, data reveals that 16 (38.1%) respondents agree that Dana Air offers the most attractive aviation conditions in Nigeria, while 22 (52.3%) and 4 (9.5%) respondents disagree and are undecided, respectively. The implication is that more respondents believe that although Dana Air offers attractive aviation conditions, they are, however, not the airline with the most attractive aviation conditions in Nigeria.

Respondents were also required to respond to their perception of Dana Air's communication competence. The findings are presented in Table 4.9.

**Table 4.9: Respondents Opinions on Communication Competence from Dana Air**

<b>B</b>	<b>Communication Competence</b>						
<b>S/N</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>Total</b>
6.	Dana Air often communicates with me	4 (9.5%)	16 (38.1%)	4 (9.5%)	10 (23.8%)	8 (19%)	42 (100%)
7.	Dana Air keeps me well updated with necessary flights and other information	4 (9.5%)	18 (42.8%)	0	10 (23.8%)	10 (23.8%)	42 (100%)
8.	I am free to air my opinions to Dana Air whenever the need arises	2 (4.8%)	24 (57.1%)	6 (14.3%)	0	10 (23.8%)	42 (100%)
9.	There are available communication channels where I can communicate with Dana Air	4 (9.5%)	22 (52.4%)	6 (14.3%)	2 (4.8%)	8 (19%)	42 (100%)
10.	I receive feedback whenever I make complaints	2 (4.8%)	12 (28.6%)	10 (23.8%)	8 (19%)	10 (23.8%)	42 (100%)

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2020**

Table 4.9 presents data from respondents' opinions on the communication competence from Dana Air. Findings reveal that 20 (47.6%) agree that Dana Air often communicates with them while 14 (33.3%) respondents disagree and another 8 (19%) respondents are undecided. The data implies that while more respondents agree that Dana Air often communicates with them, the margin is slim compared to those who disagree. Also, 22 (52.3%) respondents agree that Dana Air keeps them updated with flight information and other necessary information from the organisation while 10 (23.8%) respondents each disagree and are undecided respectively. The data, therefore, implies that more respondents believe that Dana Air keeps them updated on necessary flight information. Furthermore, respondents believe that they can freely express their opinions to Dana Air. Majority of 26 (61.9%) respondents agree, 6 (14.3%) respondents disagree and 10 (23.8%) respondents are undecided. The data, therefore implies that passengers are free to air their opinions whenever the need arises.

The study also investigated the communication channels available when communicating with Dana Air. Findings revealed that 26 (61.9%) respondents agree to the existence of communication channels while 6 (14.3%) and 8 (19%) respondents disagree and are undecided respectively on the availability of communication channels. It is believed that feedback makes the process of communication complete. Thus, respondents were asked to respond to the frequency of feedback received from Dana Air after enquiries or complaints are made. Findings revealed that 14 (33.4%) respondents agreed to receiving feedback from Dana Air while 18 (42.8%) respondents disagree, with another 10 (23.8%) respondents undecided. Thus, findings imply that more respondents believe that they do not receive feedback on enquiries or complaints from Dana Air.

The study further examined the level of satisfaction respondents have received from stakeholders (passengers) of Dana Air, their perception of Dana Air's innovation levels and their awareness of corporate social activities of Dana Air. Table 4.10 presents the data:

**Table 4.10: Respondents Level of Satisfaction, Perception of Dana Air's Innovation Level and Knowledge of CSR Activities of Dana Air.**

<b>C.</b>		<b>Customer Satisfaction</b>					
<b>S/N</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>Total</b>
11.	I am satisfied with the services I receive from Dana Air	6 (14.3%)	22 (52.9%)	4 (9.5%)	6 (14.3%)	4 (9.5%)	42 (100%)
12.	I am satisfied with my relationship with Dana Air	6 (14.3%)	22 (52.9%)	2 (4.8%)	6 (14.3%)	6 (14.3%)	42 (100%)
<b>D.</b>		<b>Innovativeness</b>					
13.	I am aware of innovations from Dana Air	0	16 (38.1%)	8 (19%)	12 (28.6%)	6 (14.3%)	42 (100%)
14.	Dana Air tends to innovate rather than imitate other airlines	2 (4.8%)	12 (28.6%)	6 (14.3%)	10 (23.8%)	12 (28.6%)	42 (100%)
<b>E.</b>		<b>Corporate Social Responsibility</b>					
15.	Dana Air is a socially responsible organisation	0	22 (52.9%)	0	6 (14.3%)	14 (33.3%)	42 (100%)
16.	Dana Air keeps me informed of socially responsible activities which it undertakes	0	14 (33.3%)	4 (9.5%)	16 (38.1%)	8 (19%)	42 (100%)
17.	Paying compensation to crisis victims could portray organisations as socially responsible	16 (38.1%)	16 (38.1%)	2 (4.8%)	4 (9.5%)	4 (9.5%)	42 (100%)

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2020**

The findings from Table 4.10 reveal that 28 (67.2%) respondents agree that they are satisfied with the services received from Dana Air while 10 (23.8%) believe that they are not satisfied with the services received from Dana Air. 4 (9.5%) respondents are undecided. Thus, findings imply that more respondents are satisfied with the services they receive from Dana Air. Furthermore, the study sought to examine respondents' level of satisfaction with their relationship with Dana Air. Findings reveal that 28 (67.2%) respondents are satisfied with the level of relationship with Dana Air while 8 (19.1%) and 6 (14.3%) respondents disagree and are undecided respectively. Findings, therefore, imply that majority of the respondents are satisfied with their relationship with Dana Air.

Furthermore, the findings from Table 4.10 reveal that 16 (38.1%) respondents agree that they are aware of innovations from Dana Air while 20 (47.6%) respondents disagree and another 6 (14.3%) respondents are undecided. Findings, thus, imply that more respondents are not aware of innovations from Dana Air. Also, findings reveal that 14 (33.4%) respondents agree that Dana Air innovates rather than imitate other airlines while 16 (38.1%) respondents disagree and another 12 (28.6%) respondents are undecided. Thus, findings imply that more respondents believe that Dana Air is not as innovative as other airlines in Nigeria.

Table 4.10 also reveals that 22 (52.9%) respondents agree that Dana Air is a socially responsible organisation while 6 (14.3%) respondents disagree and another 14 (33.3%) respondents are undecided. Findings, thus, imply that while some respondents are undecided, more respondents believe that Dana Air is a socially responsible organisation. Also, findings reveal that 14 (33.3%) respondents agree that they are kept abreast of the corporate social responsibility activities of Dana Air while the majority of 20 (47.6%) respondents disagree and another 8 (19%) respondents are undecided. Thus, findings imply that more respondents are not kept abreast of the corporate social responsibility activities of Dana Air. Finally, Table 4.10 further reveals that an overwhelming majority of 32 (76.2%) respondents agree that paying compensation to crisis victims could portray organisations as socially responsible while 6 (14.3%) respondents disagree and another 4 (9.5%) respondents are undecided. Data, thus, implies that the payment of compensation to crisis victims or their families depicts organisations as socially responsible.

The study further examined respondents' perception of emotional appeals towards Dana Air. These statements sought to investigate how emotionally appealing respondents are to Dana Air and Vice versa. Table 4.11 presents the data:

**Table 4.11: Respondents Emotional Appeal towards Dana Air**

<b>F.</b>	<b>Emotional Appeal</b>						
<b>S/N</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
18.	I believe Dana Air is a safe airline	4 (9.5%)	24 (57.1%)	4 (9.5%)	2 (4.8%)	8 (19%)	42 (100%)
19.	I believe Dana Air is concerned about the risks and safety of flying with them	12 (28.6%)	26 (61.9%)	2 (4.8%)	0	2 (4.8%)	42 (100%)
20.	I am glad to always fly with Dana Air	8 (19%)	20 (47.6%)	4 (9.5%)	6 (14.3%)	4 (9.5%)	42 (100%)
21.	I can trust Dana Air for my flying safety	6 (14.3%)	22 (52.9%)	0	6 (14.3%)	8 (19%)	42 (100%)
22.	I will likely patronize the services of Dana Air when it shows empathy/compassion to its errors	14 (33.3%)	20 (47.6%)	0	6 (14.3%)	2 (4.8%)	42 (100%)
23.	I am likely to say positive things about Dana Air	12 (28.6%)	20 (47.6%)	2 (4.8%)	0	8 (19%)	42 (100%)
24.	I will forgive Dana Air if it apologizes for acts that lead to a crisis/risk	12 (28.6%)	8 (19%)	10 (23.8%)	6 (14.3%)	6 (14.3%)	42 (100%)
25.	I prefer Dana Air as my number one carrier when I need to travel by air	6 (14.3%)	20 (47.6%)	2 (4.8%)	4 (9.5%)	10 (23.8%)	42 (100%)

**Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2020**

The findings from Table 4.11 reveal that the majority of 28 (67.2%) respondents agree that Dana Air is a safe airline while 6 (14.3%) respondents disagree and another 8 (19%) respondents undecided. Thus, findings imply that passengers believe that Dana Air is safe. Also, the majority of 38 (90.5%) respondents agree that Dana Air is concerned about the risks and safety of flying with them while 2 (4.8%) respondents each disagree and are undecided respectively. Findings, therefore, imply that passengers have confidence that the management of Dana Air is concerned with the risks and safety of flying. Also, findings reveal that respondents are glad to always fly with Dana Air. This is revealed in the response of 28 (67.2%) respondents while 10 (23.8%) and 4 (9.5%) respondents disagree and are undecided respectively. The confidence in Dana Air further translated into passengers trusting the organisation for their flying safety. The majority of 28 (67.2%) respondents agree that they trust Dana Air for flying safety while 6 (14.3%) and 8 (19%) respondents disagree and undecided respectively. Therefore, findings imply that more passengers trust Dana Air for their flying safety.

The findings from Table 4.11 further reveal that an overwhelming majority of 34 (80.9%) respondents would likely patronize the services of Dana Air if they show empathy/compassion in correcting their errors. However, 6 (14.3%) respondents disagree and 2 (4.8%) respondents are undecided if they would patronize the services of Dana Air if they show empathy/compassion after an error. Findings, therefore, imply that passengers will still patronize the services of Dana Air when they show empathy/compassion after errors have been committed. Once errors have been committed and compassion was shown, findings reveal that passengers are likely to say positive things about Dana Air. This is revealed in the opinions of 32 (%) respondents who agree while 2 (4.8%) respondents disagree and another 8 (19%) respondents are undecided. However, 20 (47.6%) respondents agree that they will forgive Dana Air if the organisation apologizes for acts that lead to crises while 16 (38.1%) disagree and another 6 (14.3%) are undecided. Thus, findings imply that respondents will forgive organisations when they apologize for acts that lead to crises. Finally, 26 (61.9%) respondents agree that they prefer Dana Air as their number one carrier when they need to travel by air while 8 (19%) respondents disagree and another 10 (23.8%) are undecided. The findings thus imply that Dana Air is the respondents' preferred airline.



The study further examined respondents' perceptions on the quality of management and general reputational statements of Dana Air. The findings are presented in Table 4.12:

**Table 4.12: Respondents Opinions on the Quality of Dana Air’s Management and General Reputation of Dana Air.**

<b>G</b>	<b>Quality of Management</b>						
<b>S/N</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
26.	I believe Dana Air is run by quality management	4 (9.5%)	26 (61.9%)	4 (9.5%)	4 (9.5%)	4 (9.5%)	42 (100%)
27.	I believe Dana Air has a well-balanced vision for the future	4 (9.5%)	18 (42.8%)	0	4 (9.5%)	16 (38.1%)	42 (100%)
28.	Dana Air looks like an organisation with a strong prospect for growth	6 (14.3%)	22 (52.9%)	4 (9.5%)	6 (14.3%)	4 (9.5%)	42 (100%)
<b>H</b>	<b>General Reputation</b>						
29.	In my opinion, Dana Air has a positive reputation	6 (14.3%)	20 (47.6%)	2 (4.8%)	10 (23.8%)	4 (9.5%)	42 (100%)
30.	I believe that Dana Air’s reputation is better than other competitors	0	12 (28.6%)	8 (19%)	14 (33.3%)	8 (19%)	42 (100%)
31.	I would recommend Dana Air to family and friends	6 (14.3%)	20 (47.6%)	6 (14.3%)	4 (9.5%)	6 (14.3%)	42 (100%)
32.	I will patronize the services of Dana Air if they show commitment/assurances to making situations better	10 (23.8%)	24 (57.1%)	4 (9.5%)	0	4 (9.5%)	42 (100%)

**Source: Researcher’s fieldwork, 2020**

The data from Table 4.12 reveals that 30 (71.4%) respondents agree that Dana Air is run by quality management while 8 (19%) respondents disagree and another 4 (9.5%) respondents are undecided. Findings, thus, imply that respondents believe that Dana Air is run by quality management. Also, findings reveal that 22 (52.9%) respondents agree that Dana Air has a well-balanced vision for the future while 4 (9.5%) respondents disagree and another 16 (38.1%) respondents are undecided. Thus, findings imply that although some respondents are undecided, more respondents believe that Dana Air has a well-balanced vision for the future. Finally, data from Table 4.12 reveal that 28 (67.2%) respondents agree that Dana Air looks like an organisation with strong prospects for growth while 10 (23.8%) respondents disagree and another 4 (9.5%) respondents are undecided. Therefore, findings imply that more respondents believe that Dana Air has strong prospects for the future.

Furthermore, the data from Table 4.12 reveal that 26 (61.9%) respondents agree that Dana Air has a positive reputation while 12 (28.6%) respondents disagree and another 4 (9.5%) respondents are undecided. The findings, thus imply that a majority of Dana Air's passengers believe that the organisation has a positive reputation. However, the findings from 22 (52.3%) respondents reveal that the reputation of other airline organisations in Nigeria are better than Dana Air, while 12 (28.6%) respondents preferred Dana Air's reputation to others, with another 8 (19%) respondents undecided. Despite this opinion, 26 (61.9%) respondents agree that they would recommend Dana Air to family and friends while 10 (23.8%) respondents will not recommend Dana Air to family and friends and another 6 (14.3%) respondents are undecided. Finally, data from Table 4.12 reveals that an overwhelming majority of 34 (80.9%) respondents will patronize the services of Dana Air if they show commitment/assurances to making situations better while 4 (9.5%) disagree and another 4 (9.5%) respondents are undecided. Thus, findings imply that when Dana Air shows commitment towards situations that would improve the welfare of passengers, they will receive high customer patronage.

The study also investigated the major faults that passengers have encountered with Dana Air. This open-ended questionnaire item presented respondents the opportunity to provide real-life experiences and challenges faced during their encounter with Dana Air. Some challenges faced by customers are as listed "flight delay/disruption of flight schedule," "time management," "bad customer service, constant rescheduling of flight

without communication,” “they do not fly to many locations,” “the leg room spaces for tall passengers are a challenge,” “flight delay and unattractive interior,” “their response to complaints is slow,” “Customer service needs to improve,” “delay in flights and no good communication service” among others.

A closer look at respondents' opinions reveals that a major challenge they have encountered with Dana Air is in the disruption and delay of the flight schedule. This is revealed by more than half of all the respondents. Also, many respondents identified the need for Dana Air to improve their customer service as many flights were rescheduled without prior notice and time management. Specifically, one respondent opined that “Dana is used to constant rescheduling of flight without communication.” another respondent stated that “...my colleague who flew Dana last year were stranded in Lagos airport for over 7 hours.” Other categories of responses were in the areas of the unattractive interior, the difficulty for tall passengers with the legroom spaces in the flight, inability to fly to many locations in Nigeria, slow response to complaints, among others.

Furthermore, respondents freely commented on their general perception of the reputation of Dana Air. Again, this open-ended questionnaire item assisted respondents to discuss both positive and negative aspects of Dana Air's reputation. Some responses include. “I find it friendly particularly its air hosts and hostesses. They are brilliant. However, Dana has to improve on its flights' information,” “I perceive it is an airline out for just business and rarely communicate with client after service delivery. Their aircraft are old,” “Standard airline procedure observed...nothing extra about the airline,” “Dana Air is a good airline but they need to work on their services to people and proper time management.”

Other respondents observed “they have made an amazing come-back after the tragic air crash in 2012. However, they need to do more work on keeping to a schedule of their flight,” “Lack of presence on social media,” “...they should do better in communicating to passengers when there is a delay,” “...I think Dana Air is perceived to be more timely with its flights than most competitors,” “...I like Dana Air, it's my first choice in Nigeria. Though they still bear some stigma from the plane crash, I am sure they'd be more careful now,” “Dana Air needs a better strategy to accomplish growth, reliability, and trust. It needs to connect more with passengers and act like

they are really in for the competition,” “they have a fairly good reputation,” “they don't keep to their words and are not mindful of their customers,” “good services but can be better,” among other responses.

## **4.2 SECTION B - Discussion of Research Findings**

The central objective of this study was to investigate the crisis response strategies employed by Dana Air in their response to the 2012 plane crash. It further sought to examine stakeholder's perception of the reputation of Dana Air seven years after the plane crash. Hence, research questions were generated to investigate this crisis case. The following is a discussion of the findings from the data gathered from the study.

### **4.2.1 Discussion on Research Question One**

Research question one investigated the response strategies employed by Dana Air in the aftermath of the 3rd June 2012 plane crash at the Iju-Ishaga area of Lagos State. The plane crash resulted in attempted reputational damage and attracted wide media attention, both within and outside Nigeria. After a robust analysis of corporate messages in the form of press releases, press conferences, media statements, relevant organisational documents, newspaper reports gathered within one month after the crash, and Accident Investigative Bureau (AIB) Final Report on the crash, the findings revealed that Dana Air responded to the crash by constantly providing updated information about the crash to stakeholders. There was information about the total number of passengers and crew aboard the flight, where the plane crashed, the plane's maintenance record, among others. The management of Dana Air also displayed empathy for the victims' families and constantly commiserated with the families and friends of the dead and injured ones.

The findings revealed that although Dana Air's first response to the crash was a condolence message on its website, it followed it up with a press release by its CEO, Jacky Haitharamani, on Monday afternoon, 4th June 2012, which was 24 hours after the incident. In the statement, Haitharamani expressed sadness over the tragic incident and gave in-depth flight details 9J-992 and registration number 5N-RAM, which departed Abuja for Lagos. He further provided information about the total number of passengers numbering one hundred and forty-six (146) and crew members numbering seven (7) onboard the ill-fated flight. Furthermore, the statement revealed that a 24-

hour call centre and an information centre were set up to brief the families and update stakeholders as events unfolded. The statement further disclosed that although the management of Dana Air was not aware of the cause of the crash at that time, it had subjected itself to investigation from relevant regulatory agencies in Nigeria and the U.S. and expressed its readiness to cooperate with these agencies. Haitharamani ended the press statement by once again showing empathy with the families and friends of victims.

While crisis scholars have no consensus on the exact timing to respond to crises, literature is replete with enough evidence to show that crisis managers must respond on time. One primary objective of responding to crises on time is reducing and containing harm (Bell, 2010). Timely responses to crises help to avert misinformation, disinformation, and fake news, especially in an era of digital media where information travels fast. The earlier a crisis broke out, the faster crisis managers must respond to the crisis. Coombs (2007) reinforced the timely response strategy and opined that crisis managers should be quick, accurate, and consistent in their communication. While it may not be safe to conclude that the management of Dana Air did not respond to the crisis by giving out information immediately after the crash occurred, it could be said that a crisis of this magnitude required prompt response since lives were lost and property destroyed.

On the one hand, crisis communication experts have argued that responding to crises must be done quickly by providing accurate information. The implication of a prompt response shows that organisations control the crisis. As Heath (1994) cited in Coombs (2007) posited, an immediate crisis response assists in creating an impression of control and is necessary to present the organisation's side of the crisis story to the stakeholders, including the media, while a slow response could portray the organisation as incompetent in handling the crisis. On the other hand, however, to give out timely information to the stakeholders who are yearning for information, crisis managers must ensure that they give out accurate information. How can crisis managers give timely information about crises when they may not have detailed information within a few hours after the crises break out?

An example of an organisation that responded on time during a crisis was Johnson & Johnson's response to the Tylenol product tampering in the U.S. in 1982. It was

reported that seven (7) people in Chicago had died after consuming cyanide-laced Tylenol capsules. Therefore, in a bid to respond quickly to the situation, the spokesperson for Johnson and Johnson revealed during a press conference that there was no cyanide in the plant that produced Tylenol. However, he later discovered that he provided inaccurate information as he did not have enough information during his response. Thus, while Johnson and Johnson's spokesperson responded quickly by providing crisis information, such information was inaccurate.

In another instance, an Asiana Airlines Boeing 777 that departed from Seoul to San Francisco on 6th July 2013 crashed into the runway while attempting to land at the San Francisco Airport. Out of the two hundred and ninety-one (291) passengers on board, one hundred and eighty-two (182) sustained various injuries, while three (3) lost their lives (Brataas, 2018). In response to the incident, Asiana Airline's first response was through four corporate messages released on Twitter (tweets) within 12 hours after the incident. However, it took about eight hours before they issued a press release, which did not have any words on compassion or apology (Brataas 2018). The Asiana crisis example provides evidence of a prompt response within 12 hours of the incident.

In a similar plane crash incident, Germanwings flight 4U 9525 crashed into the mountainside at Massif des Trois- Eveches in the French Alps on 24th March 2015, killing all 150 passengers on board. In its response to the crisis, Germanwings published their first tweet about the crisis incident within an hour and followed up with news on Facebook and their website (Brataas, 2018). In a follow-up message (tweet), the management of Germanwings urged the publics to monitor its website for constant updates. Again, the Germanwings crisis example provides evidence of a timely crisis response within the first hour after the crash occurred.

These incidents (Tylenol product tampering, Asiana Airlines, and Germanwings flight plane crashes) reveal different timing responses to crises. Responses were given within the first 12 hours after the incidents broke out. In addition, the plane crash incidents (Asiana Airlines and Germanwings flight) reveal that though the crises were similar, the response strategies were different. This is, indeed, true about crises as similar crises will likely have different response strategies, including response timing. Indeed, crisis communication experts have claimed that crisis response strategies could be the difference between crisis management success and failure.

In another similar plane crash incident, American Airlines (A.A) flight 1420 reportedly skid off the end of the runway on 1st June 1999 at about 11:50 pm. The incident claimed an initial nine (9) lives while more passengers were reported to have died later due to the extent of injuries suffered (Condit, 2006). Also, eighty-three (83) passengers who suffered second and third-degree burns were taken to the hospital. In response to the crisis that ensued, the airline's first press release was issued precisely three hours after the incident (3:00 am). The press release confirmed the incident and further provided information about the aircraft's events to overshoot the runway. In another crisis instance, Malaysian Airlines (MAS) also reportedly responded to the crisis news about the disappearance of its flight M17 within the first 24 hours of its occurrence (Adebayo, 2017).

The Dana Air experience could mean that their major concern immediately after the crash was to issue a quick response with some accurate information about the crisis. Hence, they delayed until 24 hours before releasing their first statement about the crisis. In her study, George (2016) also reported a similar finding when she noted that Dana Air took a full 24 hours before delivering its first media statement. However, one could infer that Dana Air's initial response to the crisis was slow. Their press statement was released a little too late. It was a little too late because rumours often make the rounds, which are spread faster within the first few hours after a crisis, especially with the advent of digital technologies. Indeed, there were immediate rumours about the plane's airworthiness that crashed. According to various social media sites and airline personnel at the time, the crashed aircraft was not airworthy and had reported faults before the crash. Also, the then Minister of Aviation, Mrs. Stella Oduah, had disclosed that the late pilot had contacted the Control Tower on the evening of the crash. There were also rumours about the plane's age and a prior near-crash history of the crashed aircraft.

However, the management of Dana Air responded by debunking some of these rumours a day after the crash, while other rumours were debunked four (4) days after the crash. While Dana Air's management must be commended for constantly providing and updating stakeholders with information, they did not respond swiftly to the rumours, which could permanently destroy their reputation. As it is often said, if you do not swiftly tell your story, someone else will tell it for you, which could be damaging. In a fast-paced media environment where rumours are likely to tarnish the



reputation of organisations, it is expedient that crisis managers respond quickly to crises by providing helpful information, especially through social (digital) media.

Despite the preceding, the first press release revealed that the management of Dana Air provided information that answered the *what*, *where*, and *when* enquiries needed by the public. They further acknowledged that they could not provide the *how* (how the crash happened) and the *why* (the cause) of the incident. By providing this necessary crisis information, Dana Air fulfilled the assertions of Daugherty (1992), who posited that the initial response by any organisation in crisis was to control the event and the gathered facts. The initial crisis response during a crisis was what Sturges described as instructing information. Sturges further posited that instructing information - which is part of the goals of crisis response - is crisis communication content from organisations in crises aimed at updating the general stakeholders on what to prepare for, how to react, and the necessary actions to be taken. Coombs (2007) further added that instructing information involves informing stakeholders about protecting themselves physically during crises. The stakeholders should be provided with information that could reduce tension and rumours. Malaysian Airlines (MAS) employed a similar instructing information strategy during the disappearance of flight M17 from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, China, on 17th June 2014 (Adebayo, 2017). MAS provided instructing information that included full disclosure about the crisis.

As part of Dana Air's instructing information, they informed stakeholders of the provision of a Crisis Management Centre and a 24-hour Call Centre service, both located at the Murtala Muhammed Airport Terminal 2 (MMA2). These services aimed to assist and provide the families of the bereaved with valuable crisis information. In addition, stakeholders were informed that investigations into the crash had begun under the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority's supervision (NCAA) and assisted by investigators from the U.S National Safety Transportation Board (NSTB). This instructive information portrayed Dana Air as providing full disclosure on available crisis information at that time. It also portrayed the organisation as being in control of telling its crisis story. These moves represented themselves as an organisation concerned with their stakeholders, without whom they would be out of business, and to reduce reputational damage.

Dana Air followed up on its crisis response with several other statements and updates after the first statement was released to the public. The second response was provided during a press conference, a day after the crash, by the Director of Flight Operations, Captain Oscar Wason. During the press conference, Capt. Wason attempted to refute allegations and rumours about the safety of the aircraft concerning its age. He had stated that the crashed aircraft was 22 years old, and its age had nothing to do with its safety. While Capt. Wason attempted to provide information, his statement seemed to have been misplaced. His statement was considered inappropriate because pragmatically, he was insinuating that a causal factor of the plane crash was not a result of the age of the aircraft. However, this was an indictment on Dana Air as findings revealed that the Federal Government of Nigeria, had in 2002, directed a total phase-out of all aircraft from the Nigerian airspace over 22 years. This policy was expected to be binding on all aircraft even after 2002.

However, the findings revealed that the aviation policy on the total phase-out of all aircraft more than 22 years old was ambiguous. When a policy becomes unclear or too ambiguous, it becomes difficult to achieve its goals. Could Dana Air then be said to have contravened this policy? Obviously, it did not. Little wonder Capt. Wason was convinced that the age of the aircraft had nothing to do with its safety. In addition, the CEO revealed several other aircraft whose ages were more than the crashed aircraft still flying the Nigerian airspace. Thus, there was no specific mechanism of the government saddled with checking on policy implementation.

Interestingly, the Chief Operating Officer of Dana Air, Mr. Obi Mbanuzuo, while speaking with ThisDay news at the 12th Anniversary of the Airline in November 2020, identified “policy summersault” as an obstacle in the airline industry (Eze, 2020). He disclosed that one major challenge of the environment was planning. While attempting to plan a policy could come up and erode the plan unexpectedly. Hence, since they did not control the environment it was difficult to plan, as every newly appointed Minister of Aviation comes to make new laws or tweak existing ones. Therefore, it was difficult to plan as the laws were not institutionalized by existed at the whims of individuals.

Through the Ministry of Aviation and other aviation regulatory agencies, the Nigerian government is thus advised to adopt and implement policy-engaged research. Policy-engaged researches are empirical findings of policy research engaged around specific

policy issues and have the input of relevant actors. Implementations of policy-engaged research findings usually minimise policy failure.

Furthermore, another piece of evidence that emerged from Dana Air's response to the crisis was that it did not show as much closeness with the media as expected. While there were allegations and rumours about the plane's condition that crashed, the management of Dana Air, though they responded late to these rumours, could have moved around with the press and updated them about the maintenance efforts on their planes. The press would have, in turn, reported this news with pictures and videos as evidence. Also, a certificate or clearance to fly from regulatory agencies could have been shown as evidence to the media. This way, the media will likely report facts that they received from Dana Air.

The findings also revealed a crisis response blunder and indictment on the management of Dana Air and the NCAA during another press conference led by its CEO Jacky Hathiramani and Capt. Wason. While fielding questions during the press conference on speculations surrounding the plane crash, Capt. Wason revealed that the only way that aircraft could have crashed was to lose both engines. Hence, there were speculations, as they (Dana Air management) did not even know the cause. At this point, Capt. Wason insinuated that the only reason the plane would have crashed was if there was a loss of both engines. This statement contradicts his first statement a day after the crash and further indicts Dana Air, the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), and all those responsible for carrying out audit checks on aircraft in Nigeria. Dana Air had earlier insisted that the crashed aircraft was regularly maintained and under the directives of the NCAA.

In addition, CEO Hathiramani, while debunking allegations that the age of the aircraft could have been a probable cause of the crash, disclosed that about 900 of the MD-80 aircraft were still currently flying internationally. He further added that the average age of MD-80 aircraft flown by American Airlines and Delta Airlines and those flying within Nigeria were even more than theirs (Dana Air), therefore, the age of their fleets were not considered to be the cause of the plane crash (see Appendix 7).

The statements credited to the CEO and Capt Wason are replete with hasty conclusions and indictments. The comments indirectly implied that the crashed aircraft was safe and regularly maintained and that the cause of the crash could not have resulted from

the aircraft being too old. While this is a hasty decision, considering that investigations into the crash were ongoing at that time, it was not a good strategy in managing a crisis of this magnitude. It leaves one to wonder if they were genuinely sorry about the tragic incident. Instead, they should have been more concerned with concerted efforts to show sympathy, empathy, and condolence to the bereaved families.

In contrast to the almost insensitive responses from Dana Air, the 2017 Final Report from the Accident and Investigation Bureau (AIB) revealed that one of the causes of the crash was dual engine failure. According to the report, engine number one was lost only after seventeen (17) minutes into the flight, while the second engine failed to respond throttle movement on demand for greater power to keep the plane in its current flight configuration (AIB Report, 2017). This report is an indictment on the management of Dana Air, who had, at different press conferences, offered repeated assurances to stakeholders that the aircraft was maintained correctly and airworthy. It meant that its engineers did not completely do what they were supposed to do. If not, they could have detected that the engines of the crashed aircraft were not in good working condition. In addition, it was an indictment on the NCAA and revealed the level of checks being carried out on airlines before departure.

Despite these identified flaws, however, the management of Dana Air is credited to have provided constant daily information to families of the victims and stakeholders generally. Every communicative effort sent out to stakeholders was filled with messages of sympathy and assurances of the organisation's readiness to assist the families of the victims and injured. Sturges and Coombs (2007) referred to these types of messages as adjusting information. Adjusting information, described as the second objective of strategic crisis response, involves sending messages of compassion and reassurance to stakeholders and information on efforts made to prevent a repeat of the crisis. Adjusting information strategy was found in almost all statements, including obituaries and paid adverts in national newspapers. There was adjusting information on the number of recovered bodies, information on the recovery of the aircraft's black box, assurances of payment of insurance claims, and providing relief materials to injured victims. Furthermore, there was adjusting information on the deployment of a team of counsellors and psychotherapists that assisted in the management of trauma, anxiety, and other associated ailments experienced by the families of the bereaved and

the 24 hour Call Centre service and helplines with numbers for further enquiries and information from the public, among others.

Dana Air's response constantly revealed a commitment to providing information on the crisis to stakeholders at every opportunity. During one of the press conferences, the CEO reiterated the commitment of Dana Air to "get to the bottom of this (the crash) to find out what exactly happened...and when this is known, we will share this with you" (press conference excerpts). There is a commitment to update stakeholders about crisis information. Indeed, this is one of the goals of crisis communication. It involves keeping stakeholders informed and abreast of crisis information to protect its reputation. It is instructive to note that holding press conferences are in line with the submissions of Regester and Larkin (2008), who posited that the organisation's most senior executive should give a press conference on a crisis.

Despite the suspension of its operating license, Dana Air went ahead to condole with the victims' families. The Chairman of the organisation, Ramesh Hathiramani, personally met with family members of the deceased who were grouped at the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital, Ikeja. During the visit, the Chairman was observed to have taken responsibility for the plane crash as contained in his statement (*see appendix 4*). According to Coombs (2007), although instructing and adjusting information are often discussed as separate entities, both constructs provide information about the crisis context, assist in the reduction of uncertainties caused by a crisis, and reassure the stakeholders of the organisation's commitments in managing the crisis. These were evident in Dana Air's response as they not only provided instructing and adjusting information but further sought to reduce uncertainties and reassured stakeholders of commitments to managing the crisis.

The findings further revealed that another strategy from Dana Air in responding to the crisis was in its resolve in presenting itself as socially responsible and responsive to the plights of victims and injured through the payment of compensation. Dana Air assured families of the dead victims of its resolve to pay the sum of thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000 or N4.6 million) within the first thirty (30) days, according to the law, while a final settlement of \$100,000 (N15 million) was to be paid later to each family after the completion of requirements by the law. This compensation strategy is in line with Richardson's assertions cited in Mejri and De Wolf (2013) that organisational

managers should reduce the crisis and offer support to those affected by it during the crisis stage.

Furthermore, Dana Air showed care for external and internal stakeholders - their departed crew members - as statements and condolence messages were found in its communication efforts. At different statements, the organisation's management publicly eulogized its crew members who lost their lives and described them as the best and most dedicated employees any organisation could hope for. Also, full-page newspaper obituaries were placed at least twice each week in the Guardian and Punch newspapers to condole with families of their crew members.

Also, the researcher observed that Dana Air did not use only one crisis spokesperson when responding to the crisis. While the CEO personally signed press releases and led other officials during press conferences, the Chairman, the Flight Captain, and the media spokesperson of Dana Air also spoke on behalf of the organisation days after the crash. This strategy is consistent with the assertions of Condit (2006), who stated that because a crisis was an all day job that required utmost attention, most organisations require more than one spokesperson.

Finally, the continuous use of similar empathetic words, which appeared in almost all the corporate messages sent out by Dana Air, is symbolic and commendable. Empathetic words such as “we regret...”, “we are deeply saddened...”, “we commiserate...” represent consistency in their messages. Consistency of messages mixed with empathetic words are common occurrences in crisis communication messages to reveal that organisations are compassionate and consistent in their communications.

Therefore, research question one revealed that Dana Air’s communication and other efforts during the crisis paid off as their operating licence was restored in September 2012. While it could be hastily concluded that communication strategies were solely responsible for the return of Dana Air’s operating licence, it could, however, be inferred that its communication efforts, among other non-public relations efforts, played a significant role in ensuring that the organisation regained its licence and is still in operation till date. According to Coombs (2009), the primary focus of crisis communication is on how organisations use communication to manage information and meaning during crises. During the tragic incident, Dana Air communicated with

stakeholders and fulfilled compensation obligations to affected families. As the KII revealed, a significant focus during the response was to ensure continuous communication to the public. This objective, to a large extent, was achieved.

Dana Air also demonstrated genuine care for the victims' families, as revealed in the repeated assurances given to stakeholders and the constant provision of needed information and updates. From the press statement released after the crash to information about the recovery of the black box to visiting family members of the deceased, Dana Airline proved that their response strategy was not something to be questioned. Thus, they portrayed both instructing and adjusting information in how crisis information was given to stakeholders. As Ray (1999) cited in Stephens, Malone and Bailey (2005) argued, one of the most important goals of crisis communication is to impact stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation and maintain or restore a favorable or damaged image among stakeholders. It could, thus, be inferred that the stakeholders' perception of the crisis was not an extremely negative one as they were kept abreast of crisis information. In fact, some stakeholders showed empathy with Dana Air during the trying times.

#### **4.2.2 Discussion on Research Question Two**

Research question two examined the crisis communication strategies Dana Air mostly employed in their response to the crisis. The findings revealed that four of the ten crisis response strategies were mostly employed by Dana Air in their response to the crisis and to protect their reputation. These strategies include the constant provision of (updated) information occurring thirty-eight (38) times; commitment/assurance strategies employed twenty-one (21) times; compensation strategies used nineteen (19) times; and communicating with empathy and compassion employed eighteen (18) times.

As earlier discussed in research question one, the provision of constant information is necessary during a crisis. Coombs (2004) noted that an organisation's crisis response strategy is portrayed by the things the organisation says and does during a crisis. He further identified three distinct stages which organisations must ensure when implementing effective crisis responses. First, organisations must provide instructing information, second, organisations must provide adjusting information, and third, the

instructing and adjusting information must be used to manage the reputation of such organisations among their stakeholders. In essence, crisis response focuses on how organisations manage information to the public during crises. Coombs (2009) observed that crisis communication focuses on how organisations use communication to manage information and meaning during a crisis. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that Dana Air's mostly employed strategy was the provision of instructing and adjusting information, which was used thirty-eight (38) times. The management of Dana Airline were aware that they could use communication to influence the perception of the publics. As Ray (1999) cited in Stephens, Malone and Bailey (2005) opined, during a crisis, communication is intended to influence stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation and to maintain or restore a positive or damaged image. As, research question five will eventually reveal, the stakeholders believed that Dana Air managed their crisis communication well.

In addition, most of the interviewees hailed the management of Dana Air in the way it managed information and communication during the crisis. For instance, Key Informant Participant A noted that Dana Air managed the media very well as they were neither evasive nor tried to conceal information. In other words, they provided information to the media that would be disseminated to the publics. Also, Key Informant Participant C noted that the management of Dana Air concentrated on updating Nigerians on almost every aspect of their efforts during the crisis. Also, Key Informant Participant B added that Dana Air "streamlined the release of its information through a single channel – its Corporate Communication Department to avoid ambiguity." These efforts showed that the management of Dana Air was genuinely committed to providing information to the publics. The publics also acknowledged the efforts of Dana Air's management in keeping them abreast of information. One of the interviewees also acknowledged that the provision of information "was the winning streak for the airline." Till today, Dana Air has opened up different information channels, including social media, where they constantly reach their customers and stakeholders.

Apart from providing instructing and adjusting information, the second most employed strategy was commitment/assurance response strategies employed twenty-one (21) times. The management of Dana Air employed the commitment/assuring strategy to pledge to undertake various courses of actions, ultimately aimed at rebuilding their



reputation that was damaged by the crisis. During crises, organisations make promises and commit themselves to various causes. As earlier discussed, crisis response strategies comprise what organisations in crises say and do to reduce the harmful effects of crises. Committing and assuring the publics of the willingness to embark on various actions is necessary. In addition, stakeholders want to know how the organisations will protect them – and their investments - from future crises. Thus, commitments and assurances are necessary crisis response strategies.

Dana Air committed itself to providing regular and updated information about the crisis, which they did to a great extent. In addition, Dana Air committed itself to assuring stakeholders, friends and families of the bereaved that they would do everything within their powers to provide support to families of the victims and injured victims. They fulfilled this commitment by processing and payment of compensation packages and providing relief materials and temporary accommodation to the injured victims. Dana Air also committed itself and assured families of the victims and the injured of the services of professional counsellors and psychotherapists to assist in trauma management, anxiety and associated ailments, which they also fulfilled. Furthermore, Dana Air committed itself and assured families of the victims of its readiness to release the corpses of the deceased so that they could be buried. This commitment was also fulfilled as representatives of Management of Dana Air attended candlelight services organized for the victims.

The third most employed crisis response strategy was the compensation strategy employed nineteen (19) times. Dana Air employed the compensation crisis response strategy to pay monetary compensation to victims' families and provide relief materials, packages, and paying hospital bills to injured victims. A Director of the Airline personally donated the relief materials during a visit to the hospital where the injured were receiving treatment. Dana Air also supported families of the dead and injured by providing counselling and psychotherapy services to assist them in managing trauma, anxiety and similar issues. For the families of the dead, Dana Air promised to pay compensation according to the law as its insurance agents had already commenced proceedings of paying the first instalments.

The findings from this study on payment of compensations are also consistent with those from similar studies. For instance, Condit (2006) study on crisis communication

of American Airlines (AA) flights 965, 1420 and 587 found American Airline paying compensation to families of the deceased. AA Flight 1420 was reported to have run over the runway on June 1, 1999, killing twelve (12) and injuring eighty-three (83) while several other passengers received second and third degree burns (Condit, 2006). In addition, Flight 587 also of AA, crashed on November 12, 2001. Findings from these studies revealed the use of compensation strategies as part of AA's crisis communication and response strategies.

Similarly, Dahman (2008) recorded that after the Singapore Airline Flight 006 crash, the organisation paid compensation to the next-of-kin's, albeit delay in paying compensation. Similarly, Azmi et al (2016), found the use of compensation strategies by Malaysian Airlines and Air Asia during the MH370, MH17 and QZ8501 aviation tragedies. Specifically, it was reported that Air Asia paid US\$24,000 or RM84, 700 to each family member for victims onboard flight QZ8501 that crashed on December 28, 2014. In addition, the families of MH17 victims were awarded a payment of GBP2980 by MAS, which was considered financial aid rather than compensation (Azmi et al, 2016).

Furthermore, Adebayo's (2017) study also revealed the use of compensation strategies by Malaysian Airline (MAS) when flight MH370 from Kuala Lumpur Airport with 239 persons on board was declared missing on March 8, 2014. The compensation strategy was also employed by United Airlines in a study conducted by Benoit (2018). On April 9, 2017, passengers on a United Airlines flight were enraged after crew members attempted to replace four crew members for passengers who were already seated on a journey from Chicago to Kentucky (McCann, 2017 cited in Benoit, 2018). While three passengers agreed and accepted travel vouchers, one passenger disagreed which led Chicago security personnel to physically exert force on the passenger, who sustained injuries, including a broken nose and lost two teeth (McCann, 2017 cited in Benoit, 2018). The act was filmed and shared on Facebook which generated negative publicity for United Airlines. While responding to the incident, the CEO of United Airlines offered a complete refund to all passengers on the flight. Similarly, Brataas (2018) and Canny (2016) also found the use of compensation to next-of-kin's during the tragic plane crash involving Germanwings flight 4U 9525 which crashed into the mountainside at Massif des Trois- Eveches in the French Alps, on March 24, 2015, killing all 150 on board.

By promising to pay compensations, and eventually paying, airlines companies show and fulfil their responsibility towards crises. Payment of compensations further portray such airline organisations as responsible which is expected to rebuild their reputation with stakeholders. This is aptly captured by Coombs and Holladay (2002) and Stephens et al. (2015), when they posited that by providing compensation, organisations may be able to safeguard their reputation by lowering stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation's role for the problems. Thus, Dana Air attempted to embark on positive actions towards the crisis by offering compensation to families of the victims and the injured.

Lastly, the fourth mostly employed crisis response strategy from Dana Air was the empathy/compassion crisis response strategy, which was employed eighteen (18) times. Plane crash accidents resulting in the loss of lives and damage to property are usually emotional, heart breaking and difficult times for the airlines involved. Thus, employing empathy and showing compassion is accurate, timely and necessary. Coombs (2015) described the empathy and/or compassion strategy as part of adjusting information. He argued that expressions of sympathy, information about the crisis event, involvement in counselling activities, and corrective actions are all variations of adjusting information. In addition, Seeger (2006), reiterated that one of the best practices in crisis communication is for organisations to communicate with compassion, concern and empathy which is expected to enhance the credibility of crisis response messages.

Therefore, it is not surprising to find Dana Air expressing empathy and compassion in almost all the documents, including press conferences that were used to respond to the crisis. They employed compassionate collective nouns such as “we” and “our” to express regret as an organisation to the incident. For example, some statements extended their sympathies with the families and friends of the departed victims, statements that prayed with the families of the departed, statements that expressed regrets and sadness and offered condolences, among other statements. It is instructive also to observe the consistency in the repeated use of certain selected emotional words and phrases. These were done to show consistency and remorse in all the communication messages.

Despite showing remorse in printed communication materials, the management of Dana Air also openly showed empathy and compassion at every given opportunity when they had to face either the media or the families of the bereaved and injured. For instance, the CEO Jacky Hathiramani during a press conference on June 8, 2012 (*see Appendix 7*) broke down in tears while mentioning the names of members of the crew whose lives were lost in the tragic incident. Other instances include a week after the tragic incident occurred (*see Appendix 10*); newspaper obituaries commiserating with crew members (*see Appendix 13*) and families of the victims (*see Appendix 17*); during a candlelight service organized for the victims (*see Appendix 18*) and during a Public Hearing by the Senate and House of Representatives (*see Appendix 19*).

As earlier discussed, these mostly used crisis communication strategies of constantly providing updated information, commitment/assurance crisis response strategies, compensation strategies, and empathy/compassion strategies present the management of Dana Air as responsive to the stakeholders and the crisis. One of the interviewees also opined that these mostly employed crisis response strategies were effectively used to save the organisation's reputation.

However, beyond the four mostly employed crisis response strategies, Dana Air employed other crisis strategies during the crisis. These strategies include: ingratiation, victimge, confirmation, apology, reminder, and justification crisis response strategies. The ingratiation strategy discusses how organisations seek to reduce the damage to their reputation by praising stakeholders and or reminding them of past good works before the crisis. Dana Air employed the ingratiation tactics eight (8) times to praise various stakeholder groups for their support to the organisation during the trying times.

For instance, the management of Dana Air appreciated aviation authorities who were at the fore-front of unravelling the potential causes of the plane crash. Aviation authorities, such as the National Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) were appreciated. Other stakeholder groups mentioned by the management of Dana Air included the Nigerian President as the Head of the nation, the Minister of Aviation, who was the supervising head of aviation activities in the country, and the Governor of Lagos State, where the crash occurred. Other stakeholder groups that Dana Air praised were regulatory agencies, the AIB - in charge of unravelling airline accidents in the

country, and the Aviation Joint Committee of the National Assembly, a group of lawmakers in charge of aviation in the National Assembly. Finally, Dana Air also appreciated the support of all Nigerians who were standing by them during the dark moment in the history of the organisation.

Appreciating various stakeholder groups portrayed the management of Dana Air as grateful as they recognized that they were in business because of the stakeholders. Thus, appreciating stakeholders also gives stakeholders a sense of belonging and identification with the organisation. In return, stakeholders are expected to reduce the effect of the reputational damage caused by the crisis. The recognition of stakeholders and appreciation of their support during the crisis ensured that they (Dana Air) received a positive reputation from passengers, as revealed in research question five.

Similar crisis studies reported the use of ingratiation strategies. However, findings from these studies did not reveal ingratiation tactics to specific stakeholder groups unlike the findings from this study who praised different stakeholder groups. In the case of Germanwings response to its plane crash, it acknowledged and praised customers and partners worldwide and stakeholders generally for their sympathy, help, loyalty and trust in the airline (Canny, 2016). Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) also employed ingratiation to thank its crew members in averting a near-crash incident and also restating the importance of customers and employees to organisations. In addition, Adebayo (2017) also found Malaysian Airlines (MAS) employing the ingratiation strategy by acknowledging stakeholder concerns and support. Furthermore, American Airlines (AA) Flight 587 also employed the ingratiation strategy by linking AA to a more desirable, positive light after the crash.

Another strategy found in the crisis response of Dana Airline was the victimage strategy, which was used six (6) times. Victimage strategies present the crisis organisations as victims of the crisis also. Thus, the organisations play the victim-card by appealing to stakeholders' emotions. While this tactic in itself may not be as negative as it sounds, it could mean insensitivity on the part of the organisation if wrongly used. An organisation that plays the victim card when it is clearly evident that they caused acts that led to crises may lose the trust and empathy of its stakeholders. In the case of Dana Air, as much as investigations had not revealed the real cause of the incident, it was okay to use the victimage tactics.

While employing the victimage strategy, Dana Air revealed that they also lost some of their dedicated and wonderful staff, who were the envy of other organisations (see Appendix 3). The careful choice of words, which revealed how Dana Air lost some of its dedicated staff and crew members, friends and colleagues, portrayed a collective grief from Dana Air's management. In addition, these statements portray Dana Air as genuinely expressing grief for their loss of staff in the crash. Similarly, the CEO, employed the victimage strategy and broke down in tears during a press conference while mentioning the names of crew members who lost their lives from the plane crash. "*Captain Peter Waxton, First Officer, Mahendra Rathore, Jane, Uche, Onyi and Eke we all knew them so well*" (see Appendix 7).

To further reveal the victimage strategies, Dana Air published full coloured-paged obituaries in the Guardian newspaper to express sadness and grief over the loss of its crew members. Pictures of all crew members who lost their lives in the ill-fated flight were displayed with emotional words, further showing that they (the crew) would be missed, showing a deep sense of empathy and sensitivity from Dana Air. They employed the victimage tactics to prove further that the accident was regretted, was not deliberate as they were also affected and showed compassion/sympathy for the victims and their families. Thus, it is expected that stakeholders' attributions of Dana Air being directly responsible for the plane crash will reduce.

Similar crisis studies also employed the victimage strategies. For instance, The CEO of Germanwings was also found to have employed the victimage strategy four times during his press conference and in press releases on the crisis by stating that the accident was the worst possible moment in the history of the airline (Canny, 2016). He did this to appeal to the stakeholders' emotions to make them see that the organisation was also a victim of the crisis. In addition, Adebayo (2017) also found MAS employing the victimage strategy as they requested all Malaysians around the world to pray for the missing flight MH370.

Another crisis response strategies employed by Dana Air was the confirmation strategy, which was used three (3) times. The confirmation strategy was further used to strengthen and reinforce some earlier statements made by the organisation. Dana Air had earlier promised stakeholders of constant updates with crisis information. Thus, it strengthened this promise when the recovery of the voice recorder and black box of the

crashed aircraft were made. Furthermore, Dana Air confirmed its readiness to partner with some government agencies to ensure relief for displaced families. In fulfilling this commitment, relief materials were provided to families of those who lost their lives. Thus Dana Air portrays itself as an organisation that fulfils promises or statements made. Confirming statements made by Dana Air will also have an impression in the minds of stakeholders as they would perceive Dana Air as an organisation that fulfils promises made. The confirmation and subsequent fulfillment of some promises made was one reason for the quick rebuilding of the organisation's reputation.

Additionally, Dana Air employed the apology crisis response strategy, which was used once. Coombs (2007) reiterated that crisis managers can say (apologise) or do things (offer compensation) which stakeholders and victims (or their families) will benefit from. Apologizing for crisis acts in some climes could sometimes indicate the organisation as taking responsibility, which could create lawsuits and litigations against the organisations, especially if the crisis led to loss of lives and damage to property. Thus, Dana Air strategically almost avoided apologizing, as found in its use of apology just once, but accepted responsibility for the crisis by ensuring that the families of the victims and injured were handled through compensation.

As Kiambi and Shafer (2016) observed, the apology tactic is one of the mostly used, demanded, complex and controversial strategies. Thus, Coombs (2015); De Cremer, Pillutla and Folmer, (2011) cited in Kiambi and Shafer (2016) noted that stakeholders valued apology because it acknowledged the interruption of social norms, shows respect to the victims, and is the first step toward the rebuilding of relationships between the organisation and the victims of crises. However, while acknowledging that the apology tactic could attract litigations, Coombs (2015) cited in Kiambi and Shafer (2016) divided apology strategies into two types – partial and full apologies. A partial apology is often “an expression of concern and regret while a full apology acknowledges the crisis, accepts responsibility, and provides an explanation of what the organisation will do to make sure the crisis does not happen again (p. 129). Thus, it is likely that a partial apology could be a strategy to protect organisations from legal liabilities. However, (Coombs & Holladay, 2002) cited in Ma & Zhan (2016) posit that apologetic strategies do not often optimally protect organisational reputation in crises.

There have been contradictory findings on the use of apology from similar studies. For instance, Dahman (2008) in his analysis of airline crisis communication strategies found the use of apology by the CEO of Singapore Airline Flight 006. The flight 006 was reported to have crashed and burnt shortly after taking off from Taipei on a scheduled flight to Los Angeles. While responding to the ensuing crisis, CEO Cheong Choong Kong was reported to have apologised to families of the 82 people who died. "There is no point in concealing anything", he said. "They are our pilots. It was our aircraft. It should not have been on that runway. We fully accept our responsibility to our passengers, our crew and their families" Cheong had said (Dahman, 2008:75).

Also, Azmi, Rahman, Halim and Hamid (2016) in their study on Malaysian aviation tragedies in 2014 reported the use of apology by the CEO of Air Asia, Tony Fernandez during the Air Asia plane crash. The study found that the CEO expressed regret and apologized to the family members of the flight QZ8501 crash victims during several press conferences. In another similar incident, Condit (2006) examined the crisis communication strategies employed by American Airlines (AA) during flights 965, 1420 and 587, and found the use of apologies in their crisis response strategies. The President of AA, Donald Carty, was found to have apologized in a press release to the stakeholders. Similar findings were reported by Zafra and Maydell (2018) during the Singaporean Airlines flight SQ006 bound for Los Angeles but crashed into construction equipment before take-off on October 31, 2000. The CEO of Singapore Airline was reported to apologized and accepted full responsibility for the crash on behalf of the organisation and initiated support systems (compensations) for the victims and next of kins.

On the other hand, however, contrary to findings from this study and Azmi et al. (2016), Adebayo (2017) found no use of apology tactic by the Malaysian Airline (MAS) (MH370) plane crash. MAS did not employ the apology tactics because "there was no need for them to accept full responsibility for the loss of the plane based on the information that they had and going by the fact that what happened to the plane was still unknown" (p. 194).

Apart from the apology strategy, Dana Air also employed the reminder strategies used once. Organisations can employ the reminder tactics to remind stakeholders of previous good deeds, embarked upon by the organisation. In the case of Dana Air, the



reminder tactics was employed once as the organisation reminded stakeholders that since they commenced operations on November 10, 2008, they had grown to become Nigeria's leading airline with no record of any accident until the recent one. When stakeholders remember past organisational good deeds, they will likely empathize with the organisation during crisis, which will affect the extent of reputational damage. Dana Air thus sought to reduce the extent of reputational damage by reminding stakeholders of their status as the leading airline, having operated more than 18,933 flights and carried over 1,600,366 passengers despite its short entry into the Nigerian aviation industry.

This study's findings are similar to those from similar studies on plane crash crises and the recommendations from the SCCT. However, when compared to other strategies of the SCCT, the reminder strategy was less frequently employed. For instance, Germanwings employed the reminder tactics twice when responding to crisis that resulted from the crash of flight 4U 9525 which killed all 150 persons on board in March, 2015. Germanwings reminded its stakeholders of its excellent record in the recruitment process of pilots. However, Adebayo (2017) in her analysis of crisis communication strategies during the disappearance of the MH370 flight found no use of the reminder tactics.

Finally, Dana Air also employed the justification strategy, which appeared once. Coombs and Holladay (2002) opined that crisis managers attempt to lessen the perceived damage caused by the crisis when employing the justification tactics. Crisis managers lessen the damages by giving reasons or explanations about the crisis. Dana Air employed the justification tactics to ensure that stakeholders perceived the crisis as beyond the organisation's control. The justification tactic was employed during a press conference by Dana Air's CEO, Jacky Hathiramani where he informed and provided stakeholders with reasons and explanations that the age of the aircraft could not have been a possible cause of the crash. He stated that about 900 similar aircraft, owned and operated by American and Delta Airlines, and whose ages were more than the crashed one, were still flying. He further stated that even in Nigeria, similar aircraft, with older ages than the crashed aircraft were still flying the Nigerian airspace. Thus, Hathiramani attempted to minimize the perceived damage of the crisis by providing information and defending the age of the aircraft as not being responsible for the crash.

Similar studies also found less use of the justification crisis strategies. For instance, the findings from a study conducted by Ashari, Ahmad and Samani (2017) on the crisis response strategies by the MH370 also found the use of the diminish strategy of justification. The use of the diminish strategy by Malaysian Airline (MAS) assisted in lessening the connection between the organisation and the crisis and further assisted their stakeholders to see the crisis in a less negative light.

In conclusion, research question two revealed the frequent use of four out of the ten identified crisis response strategies. These four mostly employed crisis communication strategies include the constant provision of (updated) information occurring thirty-eight (38) times; commitment/assurance strategies employed twenty-one (21) times; compensation strategies used nineteen (19) times; and communicating with empathy and compassion employed eighteen (18) times. These mostly employed strategies portrayed Dana Air as fully responsive and committed to fulfilling the promises made during the crisis.

#### **4.2.3 Discussion of Research Question Three**

Research question three examined the extent to which the crisis response strategies from Dana Air correlated with the recommendations of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). The SCCT is a theory that focuses on repairing organisational reputation during crisis. It consists of three core elements - the crisis situation, the response strategies and a system for matching the crisis to response strategies. Thus, an assessment of the crisis situation will assist crisis managers to select response strategies which are matched to each type of crisis. The SCCT discusses how each type of crisis can generate predictable levels of crisis responsibility. Thus, crisis managers can predict how much responsibility that stakeholders will attribute to the organisation.

The findings from research questions one and two had earlier revealed no attribution to the cause of the plane crash from the management of Dana Air. Rather, Dana Air had consistently revealed in their responses of having no knowledge of the cause(s) of the crash. The documents that emanated from Dana Air within the first month of the plane crash, thus, did not reveal the cause of the crash. However, they promised to keep stakeholders updated as soon as information on the cause was revealed. The

management of Dana Air was certain that they did not deliberately place passengers at risk or take inappropriate actions or violate any law/regulation. Thus, it was initially difficult to categorise the crisis as accidental or preventable. Accidental crises occur when the actions of organisations that led to the crisis were unintentional while preventable crises occur when organisations deliberately placed people at risk and took unsuitable actions or violated a law/regulation (Coombs, 2007).

However, one thing was certain. The plane crash was capable of damaging their reputation. Hence, they embarked on activities aimed at repairing their reputation. Dana Air embarked on massive instructive and adjusting information strategies coupled with compensation, showing empathy/compassion and committing itself to various causes. In addition, the organisation attempted to exempt itself as the cause of the plane crash when they employed the victimization strategy. Thus, on the surface, the crisis could have been classified under the accidental crisis as strategies employed by Dana Air were along the accidental crises type.

However, the findings from secondary sources in the content analysed data indicted Dana Air for involvement in the plane crash. Dana Air was accused of negligence over safety checks made on the engine of the ill-fated flight before it was cleared to take off. There were reports of dual engine failures and that the pilot had declared an emergency and “Mayday”. (Mayday is a French word that means, “come help me” It is used mainly by sailors and pilots to signal a life-threatening emergency. The call is always given three times in a row (mayday, mayday Mayday) to prevent mistaking it for some similar sounding phrase under noisy conditions (Shadare, 2012). The pilot was also blamed for poor airmanship and unprofessional conduct in following emergency procedures by landing in the nearest suitable airfield before it crashed (AIB Report, 2017). Thus, it was a human-error crash that could have been prevented. Thus, the crisis was classified as a preventable one.

In response to the plane crash, Dana Air disclosed that the crashed aircraft underwent necessary maintenance regularly and periodically. A statement from Dana Air further revealed that the aircraft was scheduled for another maintenance in September 2012. This statement was contrary to the findings from the experts and the AIB. Dana Air may have proven their innocence to stakeholders by showing the aircraft's maintenance records through the media. This may have reduced the level of crisis responsibility

attributed to them. However, their lack of evidence of scheduled maintenance could have implied that maintenance checks were not carried out properly. If not, they may have detected faulty engines of the crashed aircraft.

For preventable crisis, the SCCT recommends the use of the rebuild strategies comprising compensation, apology, and ingratiation strategies. In this study, these recommendations were consistent in Dana Air's response to the crisis. They employed the compensation, apology, reminder and ingratiation tactics of the SCCT. Also, other tactics not recommended were found, such as justification and victimage. The justification strategy was used to present reasons for flying the crashed aircraft. Dana Air maintained that the aircraft was not faulty and was regularly maintained. The victimage strategy was used to reveal to stakeholders that the crash was unintentional and that Dana Air was also a victim as seen in the loss of members of staff.

From the forgoing, it could be stated that the crisis was a preventable one, albeit Dana Air tried to push the narrative of an accidental crisis cluster type. Nonetheless, it could be inferred that to a great extent, Dana Air's response strategies matched the recommendations of the SCCT for preventable cluster crisis types.

The findings, however, reveal a limitation of the SCCT, thus posing challenges to the recommended strategies of the SCCT. There is less mention of crisis instances where organisations must respond to an uncategorized crisis type. The SCCT focuses on crisis types that have been ascertained to either be victim, accidental or preventable. For cases where an organisation is yet to determine the type of crisis, how or what strategies could be employed in responding to such crisis and managing the reputation? Initial assessments of the crisis may not provide actual causes or category for the crisis. Best practices in crisis communication suggest that organisations in crisis must respond as soon as possible. How should organisations respond to crisis yet to be categorized into types? What should organisations in cases where they have responded to a wrongly categorized crisis and later found the right crisis category?

It is important to note that crisis response strategies have huge influences on the outcome of the crisis and the long-term reputation of the organisation (Adebayo, 2017). The strategies employed by Dana Air in response to the crisis revealed a combination of both accidental and preventable crisis cluster types. This could have been a strategy since the actual crisis category was not determined as at the time of

responding to the crisis. Nonetheless, organisations in crisis must critically examine and assess the crisis situation and predict the levels of reputational threats.

#### **4.2.4 Discussion of Research Question Four**

Research question four examined the rebuilding strategies employed by Dana Air with its stakeholders. As Coombs (2007) observed, the rebuilding strategies are aimed at improving the organisation's reputation, as a reputation is an organisational asset that is likely to be damaged during crisis. Findings from this study revealed that Dana Air took responsibility for the incident by apologizing and went further to pay compensation to families of the dead victims and injured. Also, the management of Dana Air ensured that they fulfilled promises made during the crisis. For instance, they agreed to pay compensation, kept stakeholders abreast of updated information and also provided counselling and psychological services to the injured victims and families of the dead. These gestures by Dana Air are in line with the suggested best practices stated by Coombs (2007) as cited in Grundy and Moxon (2013). Coombs (2007) noted that organisations must deliver on all promises, including information, to stakeholders as soon as the information is known. Organisation must also keep stakeholders updated on the recovery progress and other efforts such as corrective measures and investigations. Third, organisations should analyse the crisis management for lessons learnt and to integrate those lessons into the organisation's crisis management system.

The management of Dana Air also employed the empathy/compassion and commitment/assurance strategies in rebuilding their relationship with the stakeholders. By communicating with empathy, Dana Air endeared itself into the hearts of stakeholders by putting the concerns of the dead and injured victims first. Also, they always committed themselves to continuously supporting the families of the victims and the injured throughout the entire incident.

In addition, the constant use of keeping the stakeholders abreast of information and developments on the crisis was a huge rebuilding strategy. The findings from the qualitative data maintained that Dana Air came out on top through its constant updated information to the public through the media and public enlightenment. Also, when the ban on the operational licence of the aircraft was lifted, the study found that the airline's management reduced the airfare and invited celebrities, journalists and other

important personalities to fly with them in a bid to convince and attract the stakeholders back to the airline. The first flight after the suspension, Flight 9J353 left the Murtala Muhammed Airport II Lagos with celebrities and journalists and some government officials to announce their return to business. One of the interviewees, Key Informant Participant C specifically noted that Dana Air's exceptional customer service assisted in restoring its reputation. Key Informant Participant C noted that when Dana Air's license was restored, its Management invited Basketmouth (a Nigerian standup comedian) and other high ranking officials to fly the airline to reassure the public of their safety.

Of course, other measures, that were not public relations related, were carried out. It was expected that the rebuilding strategies of Dana Air would first, engender the stakeholders' emotions to the airline, which, in turn, would affect stakeholders' perceptions of the reputation of Dana Air. Interestingly, the opinions of selected stakeholders were sampled to understand their perceptions of the reputation of Dana Air. Findings are presented in research question five (5).

#### **4.2.5 Discussion of Research Question Five**

The findings from research question five which examined how Dana Air's crisis communication strategies influenced stakeholders' perceptions of their reputation revealed that the selected stakeholder groups have a fairly high and positive perception based on the handling of the crisis. Studies on organisational reputation, especially during crises, have increasingly become popular within the last decade as an organisation's reputation is one of its most critical assets which could be destroyed during crises. An organisational reputation is the overall perception that stakeholders have about how organisations' past, present, and future actions and inactions affect and or appeal to them (stakeholders). That is, reputation discusses how organisations create value to stakeholders through its products and services, enabling stakeholders to have favourable and unfavourable perceptions and, thereby, preferring an organisation's value over competitors'. Thus, the perceptions of stakeholders can influence their behaviour towards such organisations. Also, the attention on reputation is warranted due to the importance of organisational reputation in generating investment interest,

eliciting positive coverage by financial analysts, attracting talented employees, and motivating employees (Holladay 2010).

It is important to note that it is often difficult to determine the perception of all stakeholder groups towards organisations because they would have various perceptions; individually and collectively. Thus, Dowling as cited in Helm and Klode (2011:95) suggested that “specific measurements model for reputation needs to be developed for each stakeholder group leading to as many reputations as there are stakeholder groups or individuals.” Thus, it could be easier to determine the perception of distinct or specific stakeholder groups as against all stakeholder groups. Hence, this study sampled the opinions of newspaper aviation editors, the AIB, FAAN and airline passengers.

The SCCT explained three major crises factors that could threaten the reputation of organisations. These factors include the initial crisis responsibility, crisis history and prior relational reputation. That is, for the reputation of organisations to be damaged during crises, such organisations must be attributed or perceived to be responsible for events that led to the crisis, must have experienced similar crisis previously and the public’s perception of how the company has cared for the public in previous situations (Coombs, 2007). As mentioned earlier, stakeholders determine when an organisation is in a crisis. Also, stakeholders are the ones who hold perceptions about the reputation of organisations.

Examining the reputation of Dana Air, before, during and after the crisis with the three factors of the SCCT revealed that Dana Air and relevant regulatory agencies were responsible for the crash and resulting crisis. Expert opinions from the secondary data days after the plane crash revealed that the crash and resulting crisis could have been avoided if certain precautionary measures were implemented. For instance, the late pilot was criticised for failing to land the plane in the nearest suitable airfield after he discovered the faults with the plane’s engines. Also, for the aircraft to have been cleared to fly by the relevant regulatory agencies – despite the reported faulty engines – meant that the regular checks required of aircraft was not properly done. Thus, the crisis was preventable, and Dana Air was held responsible for the initial crisis. In addition, findings revealed that Dana Air had no prior *crisis history* before the June 3, 2012 plane crash, although there were reports of similar malfunctioning of one of their

aircraft. Hence, Dana Air had an almost clean crisis history. Also, since there was no prior crisis history, there was no need to determine how Dana Air cared for the passengers in previous situations. From these three SCCT reputational crisis factors, it could be implied that Dana Air had a positive reputation before the crash and was culpable for the crash, thereby having a negative reputation.

However, when making amends for a crisis resulting from the plane crash, Dana Air embarked on measures to rebuild its relationship with stakeholders. Hence, this study examined the selected stakeholders' perception of the reputation of Dana Air seven years after the plane crash. In examining the perception of Dana Air's reputation, several reputational indices were employed. These indices (levels of measurements) were categorised into financial and social quality. On the one hand, financial classifications of reputation are represented by measurements such as payment of dividend, investment value (long-term and short-term), consistent profit/loss performance and payment of salaries. Social reputation on the other hand are represented by measurements such as quality of service, effective communication, level of service satisfaction, quality of management, innovation level, emotional appeal and corporate social responsibility. However, since it is assumed that Dana Air passengers may not have complete information on the financial aspects of Dana Air's reputation, the study only examined the social quality aspects of the organisation's reputation. Thus, analysis comprised the perception of passengers on the social qualities of Dana Air's reputation.

It is worthy to mention that participation in this study was voluntary and based on an informed consent of the participants. Respondents who eventually participated in the study indicated their willingness to participate after the objectives and any known risks were made available to them. Hence, the first page of the online questionnaire contained instructions and statements which explained the aim of the study and statements on known risks, including anonymity, after which the consent of participants were requested before participating in the online survey. Unwilling participants did not proceed with the survey.

It is also important to note that some of the reputational measures such as communication competence (in the form of providing information), ingratiation, communicating with empathy/compassion, commitment/assurance, the payment of



compensation, risks and safety, among others, were retrieved from the crisis response strategies as found in research question one. Some of the strategies formed the basis for examining the airline's reputation.

The first reputation measurement was in the quality of service of Dana Air. Offering quality service is an important indicator of reputation as they can reveal how customers perceive and rate the services from Dana Air and how the services meet the needs of customers. Findings from the study revealed that the majority of Dana Air passengers believe that the organisation offered quality services. An inquiry into the mission statement of Dana Air shows that the organisation intends to earn the loyalty of customers “by consistently demonstrating their commitment to service and providing affordable regional air transport services that focus on innovation, quality and service excellence” ([www.flydanaair.com](http://www.flydanaair.com)). By implication, findings, thus, reveal that Dana Air, as an organisation, is working in line with their mission statement. Respondents, thus, rate them high on the delivery of quality service. Also, the majority of the respondents agreed that Dana Air understands customer needs. As earlier observed, the quality of service could be seen in how organisations understand consumer needs and how their products and services meet consumer needs. Thus, respondents believe that Dana Air understands customer needs. It could further imply that because the management of Dana Air understands customers' needs, they further provide quality services.

Understanding consumer needs are different from meeting those needs. One of the needs of customers is the prompt response to enquiries. Findings from this study revealed that respondents believe that Dana Air promptly attends to their enquiries. Again, this reveals an aspect of quality service from Dana Air. Respondents rated Dana Air high because they receive prompt attention to their enquiries. Also, the findings revealed that respondents believed that Dana Air was concerned about their safety while flying. An overwhelming majority of respondents revealed this. Providing safe, quality, and affordable air transport in Nigeria is Dana Air's priority. Thus, findings imply that Dana Air is achieving its aim of providing safe transportation as passengers believe that Dana Air is concerned about their safety. Despite the preceding, respondents agreed that although Dana Air offered attractive aviation conditions, they are, however, not the airline with the most attractive aviation conditions in Nigeria.

As Fombrun observed, quality services allow organisations to show credibility and gain stakeholders' trust. Similarly, Shapiro cited in Ruiz, Esteban and Gutierrez (2014) also noted that an organisation has a good reputation if consumers think its products or services are good quality. For Dana Air, respondents rated their quality of service high. It could, therefore, be implied that Dana Air was on the path of achieving its mission of providing quality and excellent service.

Also, respondents were required to provide opinions on the effectiveness of the communication received from Dana Air. Communication between organisations and consumers are important for a smooth relationship between both parties. Findings from this study revealed that the margin of those who believed Dana Air often communicated with them to those who disagreed was slim. While 20 (47.6%) respondents agreed that Dana Air often communicated with them, 14 (33.3%) respondents disagreed. Although the figures are almost close, those who believe that Dana Air communicate with them are high. It is instructive to state that Dana Air must improve on their communication with all stakeholder groups. However, the findings from the qualitative data reveal that respondents believe that Dana Air's communication competence was averagely high. Dana Air was able to turn around the unfortunate incident of 2012 and communicate often with their stakeholders.

Also, the findings revealed that more respondents are aware about necessary flight information and other information from Dana Air. It could be implied that Dana Air is committed to providing excellent service to its customers by keeping them well informed of necessary flight information and thus maintaining a considerable level of communication with its passengers. An enquiry into the social media (Facebook and Twitter) accounts of Dana Air reveals an almost daily update on flight information, including departure and arrivals, flash sales, points of ticket purchases, among other necessary information that passengers would need. The website of the organisation also provides updated information needed by the public.

As part of the respondents' opinions on the communication received from Dana Air, the findings revealed that the stakeholders were at liberty to freely express their opinions on issues to Dana Air whenever the need arose. The liberty to express opinions could be seen in respondents' opinions on the available communication channels where they communicate with Dana Air. More respondents agreed to the

availability of communication channels where interactions with the organisation occur. For example, a random check from the social media accounts of Dana Air (Dana Air on Facebook and @DanaAir on Twitter), reveals that the public are at liberty to comment and respond to posts that emanate from Dana Air. Also, Dana Air's website allows for comments and suggestions. Therefore, there seems to be some level of interaction between Dana Air and the publics.

However, despite the level of interaction and liberty to interact with one another, findings revealed that more respondents believed that they do not receive feedback to their complaints from Dana Air. Earlier, respondents had agreed to the prompt feedback on enquiries made. However, there is an average reputation on feedback made on customer complaints. It is often said that feedback makes the process of communication complete. Feedback to messages are reactions and responses to messages received and understood. Thus, not receiving feedback to complaints could imply that Dana Air selects the messages to respond to, which could negatively affect their overall reputation. It could also imply that they do not respond to criticisms. Thus, the overall reputation on the level of communication was high except the low perception on feedback made on criticisms which was average.

The respondents were also required to respond to their level of satisfaction from Dana Air. Customer satisfaction is a necessary reputational requirement which reveals the satisfaction level of the services provided by organisations. Findings from the study revealed that more respondents are satisfied with the services they receive from Dana Air. This could further reflect respondents' earlier responses on their belief in the quality of service provided by Dana Air. Thus, findings imply that respondents are satisfied with the services from Dana Air.

Furthermore, findings reveal that because most respondents are satisfied with the service(s) received from Dana Air, they are also satisfied with the level of relationship with Dana Air. Thus, the satisfaction derived from the services received from Dana Air further translated to a mutual satisfaction in the relationship between passengers and Dana Air. This further reveals the attainment of the airline's mission statement, which is to earn the loyalty of customers by demonstrating a commitment to excellent service delivery. Passengers thus, have a high reputation on the level of satisfaction received from Dana Air.

Also, the study investigated the emotional appeal that passengers possess towards Dana Air as a brand and as an airline organisation. Emotional appeals reveal the intrinsic and innate feelings that stakeholders have towards organisations. These could be in the form of trust, loyalty, repeated purchase (patronage) among others. The findings from the study revealed that more passengers currently believe that Dana Air is a safe airline. This could be a positive motivation for the management of Dana Air as they may have successfully gained passengers' trust after the unfortunate plane crash in 2012. Also, the belief that Dana Air is a safe airline shows that the organisation's management is achieving one of its visions "...to attract leisure and business travellers from within and outside Nigeria as it targets travellers who seek safe, quality and affordable air transport" ([www.flydanaair.com](http://www.flydanaair.com)).

Similarly, findings from the study revealed that the feeling of safety exhibited by Dana Air to passengers further translated into respondents believing that Dana Air is concerned about the risks and safety of its passengers. An overwhelming majority of the respondents agreed that Dana Air was concerned about the risks and safety of flying with them. It would be recalled that findings from the pilot test conducted before this actual study revealed that airline passengers rated airlines that could guarantee their safety and attend to risks higher than airlines who do not. In addition, the qualitative data revealed that the management of Dana after the crash became more interested and always guaranteed the safety of all passengers. The findings, thus, imply that passengers have confidence in Dana Air's ability to provide safety for them when flying, even after the 2012 plane crash. Little wonder more passengers believe that Dana Air is a safe airline.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that more respondents are glad to always fly with Dana Air. Again, this could reflect the safety that passengers believe Dana Air provides. Airline passengers will fly airline carriers that consider risks and provide safety before and while flying. Thus, because Dana Air has been perceived as safe and concerned about risks, passengers are always glad to fly with them. The confidence passengers have in Dana Air further transformed into trusting the organisation for their flying safety as more passengers trust Dana Air for their flying safety.

Respondents also provided opinions on patronizing Dana Air if and when it showed sympathy or compassion towards its errors. Findings revealed that an overwhelming

majority of the respondents agreed that they would likely patronize the services of Dana Air when it showed empathy/compassion to its errors. A critical observation in crisis management discourse is the ability for crisis managers or organisations in crisis to show sympathy/empathy after errors have been made, especially if there are victims during crises. As part of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) recommendations, Coombs (2007) asserted that victims of crisis should be provided with, among other things, an expression of sympathy, which is termed care response. After the June 3, 2012 Dana Air plane crash, Dana Air was found to have employed the sympathy strategies to respond to the crisis. This could also mean that they successfully penetrated the emotions of their customers as seen in the overwhelming agreement from passengers. Consequently, while respondents believe in Dana Air and will still patronize the services of Dana Air when they show empathy/compassion to their errors, findings revealed that respondents are also likely to say positive things about Dana Air.

Despite Dana Air passengers' positive perceptions of emotional appeal, the results revealed that the difference in respondents who agreed 20 (47.6%) and those who disagreed 16 (38.1%) on forgiving Dana Air if they apologised for crises acts was slim. This could imply that stakeholders are knowledgeable and aware when crises acts are made, especially when they are intentional and preventable. In the case of Dana Air, it could be said that there were mixed reactions from stakeholders over opinions on apologising for crises acts. This could have been why Dana Air chose to politely apologise once after the 2012 plane crash. However, despite apologizing for crises acts, findings revealed that more respondents still believed that Dana Air was their number one carrier when they needed to travel by air. A general outlook at the emotional appeal outlook of respondents towards Dana Air reveals a positive perception towards Dana Air.

The respondents were provided opinions on the innovation level of Dana Air. The level of innovation from organisations could reveal how creative such organisations can be. It also reveals the inventions, sophistication and ease of doing business. It is important for stakeholders to recognise new inventions from organisations. On the perception of the level of innovation from Dana Air, respondents believe that Dana Air is not as innovative as other airline organisation in the country. For instance, respondents numbering 20 (47.6%) believe that they are not aware of innovations from

Dana Air while few respondents numbering 16 (38.1%) agree to the awareness of innovations from Dana Air. The innovative level of organisations could be increased when such organisations introduce new products consistently, which could likely boost its relevance among its publics. A closer perusal through the social media (Facebook and Twitter) accounts of Dana Air reveals certain information on some innovations of the airline aimed at assisting passengers with flight information and bookings. For instance, Dana Air, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, introduced Whatsapp bookings as well as the introduction of mobile application for easy bookings and interaction with the organisation. While these are some innovations from Dana Air, there may likely be other innovations which passengers are not aware of. Also, slightly higher respondents believe that Dana Air is not as innovative as other airlines in the country. Again, the lack of awareness of innovations from Dana Air says a lot about the awareness creation of innovations from the organisation. It could mean that other airline organisations are more visible with their innovations than Dana Air. Thus, respondents' perception of the innovation level from Dana Air is low.

While respondents' perception and awareness of the innovation level from Dana Air was low, they also agreed to be unaware or less informed about the corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities of Dana Air. Although 14 (33.3%) respondents are aware of the CSR activities of Dana Air, 20 (47.6%) respondents are not aware. Again, this reveals that Dana Air may not have provided sufficient information to stakeholders in its corporate social responsibility activities. CSR activities reveal organisations as responsible to the community and the society where they belong. Almost all organisations want to be perceived as being responsible. This is why funds are allocated in organisations' annual budgets for CSR activities. Stakeholders must therefore, be aware of CSR activities carried out by organisations. While social media has been described as a veritable tool in creating awareness, other media (TV, Radio, newspaper) could be complemented with social media in creating awareness about the organisation's activities. The onus is on Dana Air in ensuring that stakeholders are properly informed of every activity that emanates from them.

However, despite the less awareness of CSR activities, more respondents believe that Dana Air is a socially responsible organisation. While 52.9% of respondents agree, 33.3% are undecided about Dana Air's perception of a socially responsible organisation. The contrast in findings reveals that stakeholders want to be personally

informed of the strides or activities embarked on by organisations, as against general information. Each stakeholder is unique and has unique needs. It is possible that passengers want to receive personalised emails, text messages and personal social media messages informing them of CSR activities embarked upon by Dana Air. Indeed, this could make stakeholders feel important and unique.

Furthermore, as part of being socially responsible, respondents believe that the payment of compensation to crises victims portrays such organisations as socially responsible. An overwhelming majority of 32 (%) respondents agree that paying compensation to crisis victims could portray organisations as socially responsible. Indeed, Dana Air was found to have paid compensation to families of victims who lost their lives in the June 3, 2012 plane crash and injured victims. The payment of compensation is a CSR activity and thus, portrays organisations as responsible.

Furthermore, respondents provided opinions on the quality of Dana Air's management. Quality leadership, including the professional, managerial and charismatic skills of organisational leaders can reveal their abilities in achieving the vision of organisations. Also, quality organisational leaders can transfer positive reputation from the organisation to the publics. Findings revealed that majority of the respondents believe that Dana Air is run by quality management. This could be revealed in the perceptions of the quality of service provided by the airline, its corporate social responsibility activities, and the level of satisfaction from respondents. It could also be revealed in the manner the management of Dana Air handled the crises that ensued following the plane crash in 2012 and how Dana Air has consistently remained one of the most respected airlines in Nigeria. Also, findings revealed that more respondents agreed that Dana Air had a well-balanced vision for the future. A closer look at the vision of Dana Air shows that the airline wants to be "recognised and respected as Nigeria's most reliable and customer-friendly airline ([www.flydanaair.com](http://www.flydanaair.com)). Juxtaposing the vision of Dana Air and the corresponding perception from passengers, findings reveal that, although some respondents are undecided, more respondents believe that Dana Air's vision is a balanced one for the future. Finally, an overwhelming majority of respondents believe that Dana Air is an organisation with strong prospects for the future. Thus, the general perception of Dana Air's management quality was high.

The qualitative and quantitative data from the respondents generally agreed that Dana Air had a positive reputation. However, when compared with other airline organisations in Nigeria, findings revealed that the reputations of other airlines were perceived to be better than Dana Air's. Despite the perception that the reputations of other airlines were better than Dana's, findings revealed that more respondents would still recommend Dana Air to family and friends. Finally, findings revealed that an overwhelming majority of respondents agreed that they would patronise the services of Dana Air if they showed commitment/assurances to making situations better. In other words, the patronage of Dana Air would likely increase as long as they continue to show commitment towards situations that would improve the welfare of passengers.

Furthermore, the findings from the study revealed that many passengers had positive comments about Dana Air. For instance, some passengers believed that Dana Air was a friendly airline, "particularly with its air hosts and hostesses," while another respondent believed that Dana Air was a brilliant airline organisation. Also, another respondent believed that Dana Air observed standard airline procedures. However, despite the high and positive perceptions of passengers to the reputation of Dana Air, the study revealed some challenges that passengers had encountered when in contact with the airline's services. Findings from the quantitative open-ended questionnaire responses revealed that some major challenges included delay or disruption in flight schedule without proper communication, slow response to complaints (which was earlier observed) which led some to label their customer service as poor, improper time management among others. These challenges are summed up by one of the respondents who opined that "Dana Airlines is a good airline but they need to work on their services to people and proper time management."

In relation to the June 3, 2012 plane crash and its present reputation, some passengers believe that Dana Air has put the unfortunate event behind them and have come out better and stronger. For instance, one passenger preferred Dana as the first choice (airline) in Nigeria. "Though they still bear some stigma from the plane crash, I am sure they'd be more careful now." Another passenger reiterated that "they (Dana Air) have made an amazing come-back after the tragic air crash in 2012. However, they need to do more work on keeping to schedule of their flight" <sic>. Though these statements still imply that Dana Air may not currently be operating at an optimal level, they can still perform better and are doing better than after the June 2012 plane crash.



Thus, these challenges need to be worked on for Dana Air to fully achieve its vision of becoming Nigeria's most dependable and customer-friendly airline.

As Buffet (1995:109) opined, "it takes twenty years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it." Thus, reputations which are built over time, often over many years, could be damaged in minutes through crises. It shows the significance of organisational reputation. An organisation's reputation has generally been characterised as the public's perception of and recognition of social approval of such organisations (Zavyalova et al. 2016). Therefore, it is the publics or stakeholders of organisations that can gauge the reputation of organisations. Coombs (2007) noted that individuals develop views about an organisation's reputation through personal interactions with the organisation, often formed by the influence of news reports and social media. Reputations are also created through direct and mediated contacts with organisations. Reputation contributes to the competitive advantage of organisations.

On one hand, high or positive perception of organisational reputations can serve as a reservoir of goodwill for organisations, especially before, during and after crises. On the other hand, low or negative perception of organisational reputation can lead to a lack of support for such organisations and could signal the end of such organisations during crises. Little wonder organisations strive to ensure that they maintain positive relationships with stakeholders before crises to enjoy the support of the stakeholders during and after crises.

The findings from this study revealed that the selected stakeholder groups perceive Dana Air to have a high and positive reputation. While the perception of Dana Air's reputation may not have been very high, it shows that there is room for improvement for the organisation. The study also revealed an existing and cordial relationship between Dana Air and its passengers, which is evident in the high reputational perceptions. As Meer et al. (2017) observed, stakeholder relationships are considered crucial to forming the organisation's reputation before, during, and after a crisis. Findings from the study revealed that passengers support Dana Air as reflected in their emotional appeal towards its reputation. The stakeholder theory posits that an organisation is only successful when it delivers value to its stakeholders, and those values can be in several forms beyond financial benefits. With service improvement comes customer loyalty. Customers are more likely to refer other customers to the

company then. Increased customer loyalty and patronage translates into repeated purchases of product and patronage of service thereby leading to increased sales. Thus, findings have revealed that most Dana Air passengers are loyal customers who are satisfied with the services received from Dana Air and will patronize Dana Air's services if they show commitment/assurances to making situations better. The cordial relationship between Dana Air and passengers also translated into majority of them recommending Dana Air to family and friends.

The study further revealed that there were varied responses within the selected stakeholder groups, which confirms one of the criticisms of the stakeholder theory. The stakeholder theory by Freeman has been criticised for its failure to recognise the diverse opinions of stakeholders. It categorised all stakeholders as one and having similar opinions. To this end, Avery and Lariscy (2010) suggested that crisis managers should be aware that not only do stakeholders differ, but that even within the same stakeholder group, members will respond differently to a crisis. The interests of the various stakeholders cannot be balanced as they represent large and diverse groups. Hence, some stakeholders will be more dominant than others. Dana Air passengers showed diverse opinions to similar issues. Therefore, organisations must be prepared to respond to the various demands from different stakeholders before, during and after crises.

The findings from this study have assisted Dana Air in knowing and further understanding the needs and concerns of a critical segment of its stakeholders - the passengers. It provided an insight into how passengers would react when confronted by/with some issues that could affect them (passengers). In return, findings have provided Dana Air with insights into the likely crisis response strategies to employ with its passengers before, during and after crises to have a smooth relationship. The situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) is helpful here to understand and determine how stakeholders will react during crises. The SCCT also recommends crisis response strategies that could be employed after understanding the likely reactions of the public. Thus, as Freeman opined, organisations that effectively manage stakeholder concerns will survive longer and perform better than organisations that do not. Findings from this study reveal that passenger groups, as a critical segment of Dana Air stakeholders, will likely support Dana Air in the event of another crisis. This calls for concerted efforts from the management of Dana Air to ensure that the

goodwill they currently enjoy from passengers is not short-lived. Also, Xu and Li (2013) reiterated that an important aspect of the stakeholder theory examines how organisations and stakeholders must work together to deal with crises. Dana Air passengers have shown commitment and loyalty to the Dana Air brand to support the organisation.

Thus, the indications from the findings in this study suggest that Dana Air's communication and crisis management strategies proved effective as its Air Operator Certificate (AOC) was restored by the Federal Government on 5th September, 2012 "following government's satisfaction with the air-worthiness of the airline after a rigorous technical, operational and financial audit" (Dana Air Press Release, September, 2012 – see Appendix 24). The restoration of Dana Air's AOC is unprecedented in Nigeria's history of airline crashes as other airline organisations that had passed through similar plane crash incidents were never given their licences to operate. For instance, ADC Airlines, Bellview Airlines, and Sosoliso Airlines were all involved in similar crashes, killing almost all passengers on board but never retrieved their operational licenses. Similarly, some other airline organisations that commenced operations after Dana Air, who never experienced plane crashes are no longer in operation today. For instance, Dana Air and Afrijet commenced operations in 2008. However, Afrijet is no more. Discovery Airline, IRS, Airline, First Nation Airways, Associated Airline, Chanchangi Airlines, among others, that commenced operations in Nigeria within the last ten years have stopped operating (Eze, 2020). While this study did not investigate the entire crisis management strategies of Dana Air, its communicative response to the crisis needed to be studied.

Dana Air returned better and stronger. This is evident in the several recognitions and awards – within and outside Nigeria – that the organisation has won and still winning. As at November 2019, the Media and Communication Manager of the airline, Kingsley Ezenwa, reported that Dana Air had airlifted 5.4 million passengers in the last eleven (11) years of its operation (Okeke, 2019). Among the numerous awards include the 2018 Best CEO of the Year Award for the third time by the Nigerian Aviation Awards (NIGAV) and "The Most Stable Airline in Nigeria" at the 2019 Air Transport Industry Awards in Lagos. Dana Air was also named the Official Airline of the maiden edition of the Coalition of Wives of Presidents and Vice Presidents in Africa for Peace (COWAP) Summit for Peace and Development in 2018.

Furthermore, the management of Dana Air also added more aircraft to its fleet and opened up new routes in Nigeria. The Chief Operating Officer of Dana Air, Mr. Obi Mbanuzuo had, in a news report in the Vanguard, boasted that Dana Air was one of Nigeria's leading airlines with a mixed fleet of nine aircraft and over 27 daily flights to Abuja, Lagos, Port Harcourt, Owerri and Enugu. (Vanguardngr.com). Dana Air also added daily flight operations to Enugu state on November 17, 2020 and introduced additional flights between Abuja and Owerri in Imo State.

It is instructive to mention a few things about the peculiarities of this study. Since the history of plane crashes so far in Nigeria, Dana Air is the only organisation to return to business. It thus, became necessary to examine how the crisis was handled vis a vis the communication strategies. While the researcher acknowledges the great role of crisis communication strategies, it is also important to know that some "behind the scene roles" were played. One of the Key Informant Participants (names withheld) revealed that because the incident was a terrible one, they do not want stakeholders to remember at all. This accounts for the reason they consistently do not remember June 3 every year in memory of the plane crash victims. In addition, the owners of Dana Air are Indians. Another interviewee reported that highly placed Indians in Nigeria know how to get out (of trouble) through any means. That is, when unpleasant situations arise, highly placed Indians know how to negotiate their way out. They are very strong across many industries. The interviewee reported that:

Dana is owned by Indian companies and very well grounded in Nigeria, and not just in aviation industry alone. They are found across all industries... They already know how to negotiate their way out of government trouble. The Indian community is very strong in Nigeria. They can walk up to anywhere and state their demands. It really worked for them. (Key Informant Participant, June 2021).

This means that the crisis communication strategies or public relations efforts alone may not have worked in favour of Dana Air. Beyond this study, there must have been other factors that worked for them. However, despite this revelation, the Federal Government of Nigeria lifted the ban through the Ministry of Aviation as Dana Air had fulfilled the five-step certification process. While speaking on a Channels TV program, the then Minister of Aviation, Mrs Stella Oduah noted that they were cleared of any wrongdoing after due audits on Dana Air. Mrs Oduah stated that:

We carried out very rigorous audit both technical, financial and administrative audit on their operations...the panel we set for the technical and administrative audit of Dana and all the airlines have completed their reports. And in all that, Dana was not indicted for any wrong doing.

In another separate interview on Channels TV, the Chairman Technical and Administrative Panel on Aviation, Group Captain John Obiakpolor, further corroborated the submissions of Mrs Oduah that Dana was cleared after preliminary investigations revealed that there was nothing wrong with the crashed aircraft. According to Group Capt. Obiakpolor, the Committee aimed to “see into and then advice using the report or the preliminary report or anything that is found out to stem the cause of accident or further accident occurring in the country.” Group Capt. Obioakpolor further noted that the crashed aircraft was airworthy but indirectly indicted the pilot for giving wrong commands to the aircraft. He further added that the aircraft had a clean bill of health, contrary to speculations:

Well, there were lots of things, but not as being speculated on by majority of the people, which you cannot blame anybody. The airline was asked to go back to continue its operation because there was nothing wrong with the machine – that is the aircraft. Contrary to what people were peddling around. You see aircraft is never run. It is the command you give the aircraft that the aircraft obeys...” There are two engines. If two engines take the aircraft up, is airborne, one engine can manage it up there and flying is duration alike. That is what we call eat up certification which the aircraft had. The two engines had clean bill of health. Yes, the two contrary to what people were saying.

Most of the accidents that happen are never due to technical problems. You see, you have majority of the percentage, 75% is always due to human error. Like I said, it is the command you give the aircraft that the aircraft carries out. If you give a wrong command, it obeys you wrongly. They will know they are crashing because the aircraft is not behaving the way it should behave. This is purely technical language I used. The aircraft is like a new car. You are driving a new car, the engine oil, the engines, the tyres, everything is perfect, it is moving for you. All of a sudden, something comes across your way. What happens? Rather than pressing the brake, you hit the accelerator. What happens, that is you give a wrong command and the car obeys you. So, in this case, something happens to one of the engines, at the beginning, the aircraft cannot turn back on its own and say let me go back to where I started. He should have returned to where he started.

We have had several cases of air returns, but it did not happen in this way. He continued on his journey. Because the captain now knows that he could make Lagos on one engine. Because eleven nautical miles to Lagos, he declared May Day. Then further on, something happened. He told the co-pilot, we have lost the throttle control, which means the active engine has packed up. And he was seeing the airport but he couldn't get there, the only thing to push it to reach the airport is an engine, and the two engines now went silent. And that is why I was saying that it is very difficult to explain why two engine should pack up in a journey of less than fifty (50) minutes. The engineers find it difficult to explain. Technically, it is difficult to explain because they are both independent of fuel supply. (Group Capt. John Obiakpolor, Channels TV interview, September 7, 2012)

The findings from Group Capt. Obiakpolor's statements reveal that human error from the pilot caused the crash. He described the late pilot's action as unprofessional. While the pilot is blamed for the crash, it is an indirect indictment on Dana Air for recruiting an unprofessional pilot. Finally, Group Capt. Obiakpolor distinguished why Dana Air's license was restored and those of similar airlines were not returned.

There are two different scenarios, because in the case of Sosoliso, ADC, those were natural phenomenon. It was wind share. That was clear. Everybody knew it. Wind share happened and the pilot did not know that he was crying. One landed and never got aid on time and couldn't control – Sosoliso. ADC got airborne and couldn't sustain. It ran into a wind share phenomenon and just went off. The two are not similar at all in any way. If you grounded these ones...if we had found out that there were malpractices in maintenance, then we would hold them. (Group Capt. John Obiakpolor, Channels TV interview)

In conclusion, this study has established that crisis communication strategies played a great role in shaping stakeholder's perceptions of Dana Air's reputation. Also, other factors beyond the scope of this study played in the restoration of Dana Air's operating license. Furthermore, the study found that the late pilot of the aircraft caused the crash with his unprofessional conduct of not landing the aircraft in an available airfield. However, Dana Air cannot be totally absorbed of the blame. It was their aircraft that crashed. Hence, they took responsibility for the crash. While reports indicated that the aircraft was airworthy, there was no proof as at the time of the crash. Nonetheless, Dana Air's operating license was restored after an investigative panel set up by the Federal Government of Nigeria cleared Dana Air of any culpability in the crash. The findings further revealed that stakeholders have faith in Dana Air's ability to provide air travel safety and generally have a high perception of Dana Air.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 Chapter Overview**

This chapter rounds off the discussion on understanding the crisis communication strategies and stakeholder's perceptions of Dana Air's reputation. Therefore, this chapter summarizes the study by discussing the objectives set at the beginning of chapter one and how the researcher achieved them in chapter four. This case study research adopted the mixed methods design by examining a content analysis of relevant documents that emanated from Dana Air in response to the June 3, 2012 plane crash and survey to determine passengers' perceptions towards Dana Air's reputation. Thus, conclusions and recommendations are based on the findings generated from the study.

#### **5.1 Summary**

There are few empirical case studies in organisational crisis communication within the Nigerian context. The paucity of Nigerian crises studies may not be unconnected with the lack of crisis information among Nigerian crisis cases. Also, it could be a result of the non-documentation of crisis Nigerian cases. Hence, there is a bridge between crisis research and crisis practice as there is little synergy between academia and organisations. The few documented Nigerian crises cases focused on oil spillage in the Niger Delta (Olaniran and Williams, 2008), ethnoreligious crisis where the government and other NGO's employed strategies of the Image Restoration Theory and SCCT in managing the crisis (Prat, 2012), Nigerian tertiary institutions constant crises (Ajibade, 2013), crisis management strategies employed by Promassidor Ltd when it faced an internal crisis with its employees (Olawale, 2014) among others.

In light of the preceding, this study was designed to investigate the crisis communication strategies employed by Dana Air in its response to the June 3, 2012 plane crash and examine selected stakeholders' perceptions of Dana Air's reputation.

Thus, the study was divided into two sections. The first section discussed the crisis response strategies of Dana Air's management in its response to the plane crash. To achieve this aim, the researcher first collected relevant documents in the form of press releases, media statements, press conferences, newspaper reports, and agency reports, and key informant interviews to fully understand the crisis communication strategies employed by Dana Air in its response to the plane crash. The second part of the study examined the perception of Dana Air passengers on the organisation's reputation. Therefore, to achieve the aim of investigating the perceptions of the organisation's reputation, key informant interviews and survey were conducted among forty-two (42) willing and available passengers who were required to provide their opinions on some measurements of organisational reputation. Qualitative and quantitative results were then merged and discussed qualitatively.

The study was divided into five chapters, with each chapter aimed at understanding the phenomenon under study. Chapter one highlighted the background to the study. The background was possible after the researcher conducted an extensive literature search on the variables for the study. Through a thorough and rigorous literature review, the statement of the problem was also crafted, which necessitated the study to be conducted. Five (5) research questions were raised to adequately explore the study's depths. Also, the study's significance, scope, and limitations were extensively discussed.

In the second chapter, relevant literature and theoretical framework were extensively discussed to understand the study better. Literature for this study focused on aspects of the concept of organisational crisis, the different types and phases (stages) of crisis, crisis communication (in organisations) and expectations of crisis managers during each crisis phase, various stakeholder perspectives to crises, and perspectives of organisational reputation. Also, an empirical review of related literature that focused on airline organisations during and after crises was discussed. Relevant and related theories such as the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) and the Stakeholder Theory were discussed in line with their application to the study.

Chapter three discussed the methodology adopted for the study. This case study research employed the mixed methods exploratory sequential design. The study focused on a holistic investigation into the crisis communication strategies employed



by Dana Air after the June 3, 2012, Boeing MD-83 plane crash. Thus, the mixed-methods approach was employed in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting relevant data. The qualitative data was first generated through content analysis and key informant interviews and analysed before the quantitative data through a survey was collected and analysed. While the qualitative data (QUAL) was dominant, the quantitative data (quan) was necessary to complement the qualitative data. The purposive and convenience sampling techniques assisted in selecting the case studied, content analysed materials, key informant interviewees, and the respondents for the study. Research instruments employed were the coding sheet, key informant interview guide, and an online questionnaire.

A pilot test was first conducted among fourteen (14) willing and available passengers of Overland Airways, Ibadan. Responses from the pilot test further assisted in better shaping the content of the survey. Data was collected personally by the researcher while the link to the online survey was sent to willing and available respondents. Also, ethical considerations were sought and followed through in this research. Data was analysed using theme building and descriptive statistics. Quantitative data was analysed using a simple frequency count and percentages. However, both qualitative and quantitative data were qualitatively analysed.

Chapter four was an analysis and discussion of the research findings. The first research question examined the crisis communication strategies that Dana Air employed in dealing with the crisis. The findings revealed that the management of Dana Air employed ten (10) crisis communication strategies to respond to the crisis. These include instructing and adjusting information, empathy/compassion, confirmation, commitment/assurance, compensation, victimage, apology, justification, reminder, and ingratiation. These strategies were contained in an almost daily communicative effort from the organisation to the public and gathered through press releases, press conferences, and media statements.

The second research question examined the mostly employed crisis communication strategies evident in Dana Air's response to the crisis. The findings revealed that out of the ten (10) crisis communication strategies, only four (4) were mostly employed. These four strategies included the provision of instructing and adjusting information strategies, commitment/assurance strategies, compensation strategies, and the strategy of communicating with empathy and compassion. These mostly employed strategies

portrayed Dana Air as fully responsive and committed to fulfilling the promises made during the crisis.

Research question three examined the extent to which Dana Air's crisis communication strategies matched the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) recommendations. The findings revealed a great extent of compliance with the strategies and recommendations of the SCCT. Furthermore, research question four examined the rebuilding strategies Dana Air employed in rebuilding its relationship with its stakeholders. The findings revealed that Dana Air apologised for the crisis, paid compensation, constantly provided instructing and adjusting information, was committed to fulfilling all promises made, reduced the airfare upon flight resumption, and introduced some customer-friendly packages. These strategies influenced the stakeholders to have a relatively high perception (research question five) of Dana Air's reputation based on the motivational factors highlighted in this study.

### **5.1.1 The Major Findings Summarized**

The study explored the crisis communication strategies employed by Dana Air in response to a plane crash. It further examined how stakeholders' perceive the reputation of Dana Air based on its handling of the 2012 crisis. Content analysis, key informant interviews, and a survey were thus employed in seeking answers to the plane crash. Data gathered revealed that human errors led to the plane crash. In other words, the crisis was a preventable one if necessary human measures were put in place. The late pilot was criticized for failing to follow the laid down emergency procedures by landing the aircraft at the nearest suitable airfield while there were also concerns over the safety checks made on the engines before the flight was cleared to take off. Therefore, the management of Dana Air employed various strategies in managing the crises. The strategies include showing empathy/compassion towards the plane crash and to the families of the dead victims and the injured, ensuring the prompt initiation of compensation processes, confirming the fulfillment of some of the promises made to the dead and injured victims, committing themselves to several other causes, presenting Dana Air also as a victim of the crisis as crew members lost their lives, praising stakeholders for the faith reposed in the organisation among other strategies.

The findings also revealed that the guidelines and recommendations of the SCCT on the choice of crisis response strategies were found to be suitable and useful in the Dana Air plane crash crisis. Findings revealed that Dana Air employed the recommendations of the SCCT on preventable crises in its response to the crisis. Also, Dana included strategies that revealed some aspects of the Nigerian culture, including apologizing and taking responsibility for the crisis, expressing sadness, and showing empathy/compassion to the families of the dead and injured victims.

Findings further revealed that in rebuilding its relationship with stakeholders after the plane crash, Dana Air embarked on massive compensation strategies including the reduction of airfare and the introduction of other customer-friendly packages. Also, they employed the use of commitment/assurance strategies to continue to support the families of the victims and injured throughout the entire period. They did this to show further that they were genuinely sad over the incident and would do everything to cushion the effects of the crash. Also, Dana Air ensured that it kept to all promises made during the crises. The awards won by Dana Air after the ban on its operations was lifted also assisted the organisation in rebuilding its relationships as those awards proved that the organisation learnt from the crisis and was back for good.

Finally, the findings also revealed that passenger-stakeholders had a positive and high perception of the reputation of Dana Air eight years after the crash. From the reputation indices that were sought, the findings from this study revealed that because there was a communicative effort between Dana Air and its passengers, satisfaction was derived from the services provided by Dana Air which further led to the belief, confidence, and trust in the abilities of the management of Dana Air to guarantee the safety of passengers. As crisis literature had shown, a genuine display of empathy could ensure that stakeholders support organisations during crises. Findings from this study also revealed that there would be repeated patronage for the services of Dana Air if they showed empathy/compassion for errors committed and genuine steps are taken to prevent a similar crisis in the future. In all, passengers agreed that Dana Air as their preferred carrier in Nigeria and rated their reputation high, but expressed displeasure at some attitudes from the services and feedback mechanism of the airline.

It could be stated that the communication strategies employed by Dana Air in its response to the plane crash proved effective and in line with the recommendations of

the SCCT on preventable crises. Their constant use of instructing and adjusting information and the provision of helplines for bi-directional communication coupled with other rebuilding strategies ensured that they are one of the most loved airline organisations in Nigeria today. Dana Air also incorporated many of the suggested crisis communication best practices guidelines for the aviation industry. They have learnt major lessons from the crisis which has given them a positive and high perception of reputation from their passengers.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

Since air accidents are inevitable, it becomes necessary that airline organisations must strategically respond to plane crashes whenever they occur. Plane crashes could result from technical breakdown, weather conditions, human errors, or a combination of some or all of these factors. When plane crashes occur, lives are often lost and property often running into millions of money are damaged. Also, these plane crashes that result in crises often attract the media's attention, thus placing such organisations in the spotlight locally and globally.

Therefore, a prompt, concise, and consistent communication response becomes necessary to cushion the likely effects of the crises. Hence, the development of strategic communication responses that focus on stakeholder groups, including victims of the crash, becomes paramount to save the organisation's reputation. Dana Air was also involved in massive instructing and adjusting information to stakeholders. Literature has shown that the safety of stakeholders should first be a priority to organisations in crisis. Dana Air's strategic and prompt response to the crisis by addressing stakeholder concerns was a great strategy. Although human and technical errors caused the plane crash, Dana Air was able to surmount the challenges, engaged in massive stakeholder engagement, and are still in business, unlike similar plane crashes in Nigeria where those affected never returned to business again. The strategies and recommended guidelines of the SCCT were also helpful in restoring the damaged reputation of Dana Air, as findings revealed an adherence to the recommendations of the SCCT. Thus, the current perception of the passengers of the airline was high. While the perception of Dana Air's reputation may not have been very high, it shows that there is room for improvement for the organisation.

### 5.3 Recommendations

Following from the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- (i) Organisations in crisis must ensure that they respond promptly with accurate crisis information. While there is no consensus about the response timing for a crisis, it is advised that organisations in crisis must respond within hours after a crisis has become public knowledge.
- (ii) Following from (i) above, organisations in crisis must ensure that as much as they respond promptly, they must always provide both instructing and adjusting information needed by stakeholders to make sense of the crisis.
- (iii) Rumours are rife during crises. Rumours can make or mar the reputation of organisations, especially during crises. Organisations must respond immediately to rumours with evidence, especially when facts have been established.
- (iv) Defensive public relations strategies are more costlier than preventive public relations strategies. Therefore, Dana Air must engage in an attitudinal change campaign to help stakeholders have a better perception of the organisation. The respondents opined that Dana Air was not their first choice air carrier in Nigeria. An attitudinal change is thus required to win the heart of Nigerians to the organisation fully.
- (v) Airline organisations must ensure total incorporation of social media platforms into their crisis communication plans as it is necessary for bi-directional communication with the public and other marketing communication activities.
- (vi) Organisations must train their internal staff to be able to handle crises and in the types of responses (information) to provide during the crisis. During crises, external stakeholders will likely request information from internal employees. Thus, constant training and re-training of the members of staff are necessary.
- (vii) There is a need for clearer aviation policies for the aviation industry in Nigeria. Unclear or ambiguous aviation policies could become difficult to implement. These policies must be the results of research conducted with policy actors.

- (viii) The reputation of organisations could be damaged during crises. Stakeholders are the ones who have or hold perceptions of the reputation of organisations. Organisations that have strong pre-crisis communication with stakeholders will likely enjoy the support of the stakeholders during crises. Hence, to enjoy positive support from stakeholders during crises, organisations must have constant communication with stakeholders before, during, and after crises.
- (ix) Finally, crisis communication should be fully introduced as a Nigerian university curriculum course. Introducing the course will assist in establishing the necessary relationship between town and gown and support the scholarship of crisis communication in Nigeria.

#### **5.4 Suggestion for Further Studies**

There were certain areas which this study could not address. To this end, this study recommends the following key areas in crisis communication for further investigation. One such key area is the use of social media platforms in addressing crises. Since the introduction of the internet and social media platforms in the early 2000s, crises have occurred from the misuse of social media and escalated and handled by social media platforms. Thus, it would be great to see how organisations in Nigeria incorporated the use of social media platforms in managing crises. Hence, stakeholders' reactions and responses to the crisis could be compared across social media platforms.

In addition, it would be interesting to fully understand the role of shadow parties in the return of Dana Air to the Nigerian airspace. The findings of this study revealed that other factors, beyond the scope of this work, along with crisis communication strategies helped Dana Air return to business. It would, thus, be necessary to understand these factors. Also, the study could not investigate other stakeholder groups' perception of the reputation of Dana Air. Other studies could examine the reactions or perceptions of more than one stakeholder group towards an organisation's reputation after a crisis.

## **5.5 Contribution to Knowledge**

The field of crisis communication in Nigeria is a growing field, yet an almost neglected area. The reasons for the neglect are obvious – there are no repositories of crisis information. Moreover, several Nigerian organisations involved in major crises did not survive the crises in the past. The organisations that survived are unwilling to provide information about the management of the crisis. Hence, several Nigerian scholars shy away from investigating crisis communication issues in Nigeria. Despite these challenges, this study has revealed the crisis communication strategies employed by a Nigerian organisation to a crisis that threatened its existence. The findings of this study revealed the influence that the application of crisis communication strategies can have on stakeholder's perception of an organisation and the crisis.

In addition, the findings of this study have significantly shown that Dana Air was involved in defensive public relations strategy. Defensive PR focused on defending the results of their actions, rather than preventive – which focuses on efforts to prevent the occurrence of another crisis. This may have accounted for respondents who did not prefer Dana Air as their number one air carrier in Nigeria.

More importantly, the findings of this study have revealed that in Nigeria, crisis communication strategies alone may not repair a damaged/damaging reputation. Other factors, in collaboration with relevant crisis communication strategies could assist in the repair of a damaged reputation. Furthermore, the findings from this study also support the recommendations for matching crisis types with crisis communication messages which should be made available to the stakeholders.

In addition, the findings of this study have contributed to the Frank Jefkins Transfer Process Model by offering a new dimension for understanding a crisis. Frank Jefkin's Transfer Process Model explains how public relations strategies could change an unfavorable situation to be favorable. Hence, Dana Air was able to upturn its unfavourable crisis, initial rejection and suspension of its services into a favourable one using crisis communication strategies. Like similar plane crash incidents in Nigeria, it was unexpected to have their licence restored quickly. Dana Air licence was restored three months (September, 2012) after the government withdrew it following the plane crash in June 2012.

In relation to theory, the findings from this study have extended the understanding of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) to the Dana Air plane crash. Employing the recommendations of the SCCT to the plane crash crisis, findings from this study, though in line with the recommendations, present certain challenges for further development of the SCCT. There is less mention of crisis instances where organisations must respond to an uncategorised crisis type. In other words, the SCCT focuses on crisis types that are either victim, accidental or preventable types. For cases where organisations are yet to determine the crisis type, and yet must respond promptly, how or what strategies could be employed in responding to such crisis? The observation is necessary as an initial assessment of a crisis may not reveal the actual causes or category of the crisis (type). Best practices in crisis communication suggest that organisations in crisis must respond as soon as possible. How then can organisations respond to uncategorised crisis types? What should organisations do when they have responded to a wrongly categorised crisis and later found the right crisis category? In addition, the cultural differences and peculiarities of the various countries where organisations in crises are located will also impact the kind of strategy to be employed. Hence, the SCCT must consider these cultural peculiarities to make the theory more global and coherent.



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**(APPENDIX A)**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE ARTS**

**FACULTY OF ARTS**

**UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN**

**CRISIS COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND STAKEHOLDER'S  
PERCEPTION OF DANA AIR'S REPUTATION AFTER THE 2012 PLANE  
CRASH**

This study examines the crisis communication (response) strategies embarked upon by Dana Air during the June 3, 2012 plane crash in Lagos. The study will also investigate stakeholder's perception (the media, AIB, passengers, FAAN) of Dana Air's reputation.

Copies of the communication materials (Press and media releases, videos of press conferences, newspaper reports) have been extracted to understand and categorise some of the crisis communication strategies.

**KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE (Newspaper Aviation Editors)**

1. Could you introduce yourself, please? (Name and identity is optional)
2. What are your opinions about the crisis resulting from the plane crash?
3. Can you share some of the communication strategies that were employed in managing the crisis that ensued after the 2012 airline crash?
4. In your opinion, which of the strategies (in number 3) was most effective in restoring the reputation and confidence that stakeholders had in Dana Air?
5. What is your perception of how the crisis was handled and the impact of the crisis management on Dana Air's reputation?

**(APPENDIX B)**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE ARTS**

**FACULTY OF ARTS**

**UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN**

**CRISIS COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND STAKEHOLDER'S  
PERCEPTION OF DANA AIR'S REPUTATION AFTER THE 2012 PLANE  
CRASH**

This study examines the crisis communication (response) strategies embarked upon by Dana Air during the June 3, 2012 plane crash in Lagos. The study will also investigate stakeholder's perceptions (the media, AIB, passengers, FAAN) of Dana Air's reputation.

Copies of the communication materials (Press and media releases, videos of press conferences, newspaper reports) have been extracted to understand and categorise some of the crisis communication strategies.

**KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE (AIB & FAAN)**

1. Could you introduce yourself, please? (Name and identity are optional)
2. What are your opinions about the crisis resulting from the plane crash?
3. Can you share some of the communication strategies that were employed in managing the crisis that ensued after the 2012 airline crash?
4. In your opinion, which of the strategies (in number 3) was most effective in restoring the reputation and confidence that stakeholders had in Dana Air?
5. What is your perception of how the crisis was handled and the impact of the crisis management on Dana Air's reputation?
6. In your opinion, what are some of the likely strategies embarked upon by Dana Air which made them stand out from other airline organisations involved in similar plane crashes?

**APPENDIX C (CODING SHEET)**

<b>Type of Crisis</b>	<b>Code No.</b>	<b>Press Releases (3)</b>	<b>Media Statements (16)</b>	<b>Press Conferences (3)</b>	<b>Newspaper Reports (36)</b>		<b>AIB Report (1)</b>
					<b>Punch (14)</b>	<b>Guardian (22)</b>	
No accident type mentioned	1	Yes	Yes	None	None	None	None
Technical error accident (Accidental Cluster)	2	None	None	Yes	Dual Engine Failure	Engine Failure	None
Human error accident (Preventable cluster)	3	None	None	Yes	Preventable	Preventable	Yes
Both technical and human error (both accidental and preventable)	4	None	None	None	Yes	Yes	Yes
Any other type of crisis	5	None	None	None	None	None	None
<b>Crisis History</b>							
Reference to previous accident of this type	6	None	None	None	None	None	None
Reference to any other previous accident	7	None	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	None



<b>Attributions of Crisis Responsibility</b>							
No attribution of crisis mentioned	8	None	None	None	None	None	None
Accident still under investigation	9	Yes	Yes	Yes	None	None	None
Blame the organisation	10	None	None	None	Yes	Yes	Yes
Blame the circumstance	11	None	None	None	None	None	None
Blame both the organisation and circumstance	12						
Other blames (regulatory agencies)	13	None	None	None	Yes	Yes	Yes

<b>SCCT Crisis Response Strategy</b>		<b>Code No.</b>	<b>Press Releases (3)</b>	<b>Media Statements (16)</b>	<b>Press Conferences (3)</b>	<b>Newspaper Reports (36)</b>	<b>AIB Report (1)</b>	<b>Occurrence (Total)</b>
<b>Category</b>	<b>Strategy</b>							
<b>Primary Strategies</b>								0
Deny Cluster	Attack the accuser	14	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
	Denial	15	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0

	Scapegoat	16	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
Diminish Cluster	Excuse	17	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
	Justification	18	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	1
Rebuild Cluster	Compensation	19	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	13
	Apology	20	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
<b>Secondary Strategies</b>								
Bolstering Cluster	Reminder	21	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
	Ingratiation	22	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	7
	Victimage	23	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	6
Other Crisis Response Strategies	Empathy/ Compassion	24	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	17
	Confirmation	25	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	2
	Commitment/ Assurance	26	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	18

## APPENDIX D (QUESTIONNAIRE)

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE ARTS

FACULTY OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

**Dear respondent,**

I am a Doctoral student in the Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, conducting a study that examines the perceptions of Dana Air's reputation. Your sincere opinions on the following questions would be highly appreciated. All the information obtained from this survey shall be used purely for academic purposes and would be held in strict confidence.

### **ETHICAL CONSIDERATION (Compulsory)**

This survey seeks to examine customers (passengers) perception of Dana Air's reputation. Findings from this study are purely for academic purposes. Hence, **participation is voluntary. Privacy and confidentiality of data (information) is also guaranteed. There are no known risks or potential harm.**

Do you give your consent to partake in this study?

Yes

No

S/N	Statement	SA	A	SD	D	U	Total
<b>A</b>	<b>Quality of Services</b>						
1.	Dana Airline offers quality services						
2.	Dana Airline understands customer needs						
3.	Dana Airline promptly attends to my inquiries						
4.	Dana Airline is concerned about my safety						
5.	Dana Airline offers the most attractive aviation conditions						
<b>B</b>	<b>Communication</b>						
6.	Dana Airline often communicates with me						
7.	Dana Airline keeps me well updated with necessary flights and other information						
8.	I am free to air my opinions to Dana Air whenever the need arises						
9.	There are available communication channels where I can communicate with Dana Air						
10.	I receive feedback whenever I make complaints						
<b>C.</b>	<b>Customer Satisfaction</b>						
11.	I am satisfied with the services I receive from Dana Airline						
12.	I am satisfied with my relationship with Dana Airline						
<b>D.</b>	<b>Emotional Appeal</b>						
13.	I believe Dana Airline is a safe airline						
14.	I believe Dana Airline is concerned about the risks and safety of flying with them						
15.	I am glad to always fly with Dana Airline						
16.	I can trust Dana Airline for my flying safety						

17.	I will likely patronize the services of Dana Airline if it shows empathy/compassion to its errors						
18.	I am likely to say good things about Dana Airline						
19.	I will forgive Dana Airline if it apologizes for acts that lead to a crisis/risk						
20.	I prefer Dana Air as my number one carrier when I need to travel by air						
<b>E</b>	<b>Innovativeness</b>						
21.	I am aware of innovations from Dana Airline						
22.	Dana Airline tends to innovate rather than imitate other airlines						
<b>F</b>	<b>Corporate Social Responsibility</b>						
23.	Dana Air is a socially responsible organisation						
24.	Dana Airline keeps me informed of its corporate social responsibility activities						
25.	Paying compensation to crisis victims portray organisations as socially responsible						
<b>G</b>	<b>Quality of Management</b>						
26.	I believe Dana Airline is run by quality management						
27.	I believe Dana Airline has a well-balanced vision for the future						
28.	Dana Airline looks like a company with strong prospects for growth						
<b>H</b>	<b>General Reputation</b>						
29.	In my opinion, Dana Air has a positive reputation						
30.	I believe that Dana Airline's reputation is better than other competitors						
31.	I would recommend Dana Airline to family and friends						
32.	I will patronize the services of Dana Airline as long as it shows commitment/assurances to making situations better						

## **INTERVIEW RESPONSES**

### **Interview Responses from Key Informant Participant A**

When an incident of this magnitude happens, all the regulators in the aviation industry will take a back seat and only one to take over, which is the AIB. I was one of those employed to the crash site on the day of the incident. All through that period, I was able to get extensive information that made up in ... . When all the bodies were evacuated from the crash site they were taken to LASUTH and reported what transpired between the investigations (autopsy).

Also, they also managed the media arm, fairly well. They were not evasive. They did not try to conceal information and again, you have to give credit to the then governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babatunde Fashola, he took it as his major...He became the incident commander unannounced.

When the incident happened, he was there, and he said that the Lagos State government was taking over control of everything. I was at LASUTH. The following day, a crisis centre was already set up for families and friends to always have information. The Lagos State government set it up because it happened in Lagos State. The then Head of Forensic, LASUTH, Prof. John Obafunwa, a pathologist by training, he was also readily available, taking questions from the general public including the media. So, they didn't hide anything. Infact, that's the main thing that really went well for them. It was very well coordinated.

## **Interview Responses from Key Informant Participant B**

1. I am ...

2. There is always a perception challenge whenever plane crashes occur in Nigeria. The public thinks that the planes are not airworthy or unsafe without any empirical evidence to drive such accusation. Secondly, they allege that the crew may not be proficient, suggesting either loose regulation driven by cutting corners or compromise. Thirdly, they allege that the airspace is littered with flying coffins and probabilities that there is poor maintenance culture by operators.

These false positions need to be clarified by the relevant aeronautical authorities. This baggage of bad image perception is a major crisis that has to be tackled professionally whenever a plane crash occurs.

3. Dana Air, the affected airline during the June 3, 2012 plane crash deployed engagement with the industry regulator: Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), the Media and Families of Crash Victims, the Insurers and a team of Counselors in the release and management of Information through the Crisis/Communication Centre set up at the Lagos Airport.

Dana Air streamlined the release of information through a single channel: its Corporate Communication Department to avoid ambiguity. Besides, Dana Air engaged in timely release of updated information to the media to feed the public.

The airline also engaged industry safety - centric group like the Pilots / Aircraft Engineers Association and other industry think tank groups to comment on development that will not jeopardize the outcome of Investigators probe.

It engaged in public enlightenment with write ups, news commentaries, radio and television appearance by industry experts on the issue.

4. Engagement with Media / Critical stakeholders was the winning streak.

5. Professionally speaking, Dana Air came tops on its management of the crisis with the strategies it deployed. Little wonder when it resumed operations almost many months after the airline did not suffer any negative reputation concerning safety despite the crash.

Because of the tactful handling of the crisis, Dana Air till tomorrow continues to operate scheduled flights with public confidence not minding the crash of June 3, 2012.

Many thanks.

### **Interview Responses from Key Informant Participant C**

The tragic crash happened about 6 years after the last tragic crash. Beyond the pains of the deaths, it reinforced the many fears many Nigerians have about flying.

The airline concentrated on updating Nigerians about the process to compensate the families who lost their loved ones while at the same time enabling the investigators of the crash to find out what actually happened. The airline showed empathy with the family of those that lost their lives. They kept on updating them and they were really not doing much more because their fate lay with NCAA. They showed more commitment in that compensation obligation because before them, there was no effective effort to compensate similar victims before. This kind of tamed the people's anger.

What helped to restore the reputation of Dana Air was its impeccable customer service. but when it was allowed to resume operation, it invited Basketmouth and other highly placed persons to fly the airline to allay fears about safety in flying the airline.

The accident was handled well because after it happened, the airline was allowed to continue to fly, which was not the trend before then.

**N.B: Some comments were deliberately removed from all the interviewees**



## **Press Conference excerpts**

### **Reason for the lifting of the ban**

#### **Minister of Aviation – Stella Oduah on Channels TV**

The issue of lifting Dana operational permit is actually something that shouldn't have happened in the first place. It is not aviation practice. Aviation is a global sector and so there are laws, there are policies and there are procedures. Now, coming to Dana's case for instance, we carried out very rigorous audit both technical, financial and administrative audit on their operations. I think I should digress a bit by doing one or two clarifications. Dana operation has been lifted, meaning that they can operate. However, there are things that they must do. There are prerequisites that they must fulfil before they actually go on the air.

Number one the certification, we must see it and as you are aware, we said that from the beginning that Boeing is working with us to certify all the aircrafts that we have available. They must technically do the audit, and then certify them to be airworthy. All these we are doing and we have gone very very far. The panel we set for the technical and administrative audit of Dana and all the airlines have completed their reports. And in all that, Dana was not indicted for any wrong doing. However, we were doing institutional reform prior to the accident that happened. And so, strengthening NCAA to ensure that they do what they are supposed to do vis-a-vis fulfilling their regulatory obligations is being strengthened. If you look at NCAA law today, it's not what it used to be. NCAA has been strengthened and we will keep on strengthening them because it is very very important that the policies and procedures set in place are been complied by. And so to answer your question, we did not out of the blue ask Dana to go back to work. And like I said, Dana has some prerequisite that they must fulfil prior to them actually flying.

So we are just jumping the gun here by saying Federal Government did what they are not supposed to do. If you take for instance, British Airways, Air France, when they do have an accident, you actually don't close their operations. It is not done. You segment what has happened, you put aside the particular aircraft and then you do very rigorous investigation before you now do the indicting. There are cases in aviation that take three years, some take four years. You do not close the operation of the airline. You segment, you segregate and then you investigate. And that we are doing. And I want to say that for us in aviation, safety is priority, will continue to be priority, is not negotiable, is the way aviation works. Its safety! Safety!! Safety!!!

It's not a mistake. Government responded to the citizens cry for justice, if you like...government took a decision for the best interest of her citizens. We didn't do the wrong thing, we did the right thing and we are also doing the right thing as we let them go back to work right now. We did it with all sense of responsibility.

**Group Captain John Obiakpolor. Chairman, Technical and Administrative Panel on Aviation**

**Q:** The restoration of Dana Air's operating licence is based on the findings of the technical report. You are Chairman of that technical committee. Speak peak into the report:

**A:** "I wish to say that for the first time ever in the aviation history in the country, a panel, such as the one I chaired was set up. Not the accident investigation but administrative, technical review panel of domestic airlines. The aim of the committee was to see into and then advice using the report or the preliminary report or anything that is found out to stem the cause of accident or further accident occurring in the country. It was good because when accident happen, crash occur, there is always emotion, people cry out, you cannot stop it. But what you can stop is event leading to such things happening again. And that is why when this panel was set up, people were crying that it was illegal. I laugh because there was nothing illegal about it. Any action you take to stop or stem accident happening again is action taken in the right direction

**Q: So did the committee find out at the end of the day?**

**A:** Well, there were lots of things, but not as being carried on, speculated on by majority of the people, which you cannot blame anybody. The airline was asked to go back to continue its operation because there was nothing wrong with the machine – that is the aircraft. Contrary to what people were peddling around. You see aircraft is never run. It is the command you give the aircraft that the aircraft obeys. And that is the problem. Nobody today knew what happened to the aircraft because it is very difficult to believe that two engines flame out almost simultaneously in a journey of less than one hour. Because that aircraft has a certificate for extended operation, which we call eat up. There are two engines. If two engines take the aircraft up, is airborne, one engine can manage it up there and flying is duration alike. That is what we call eat up certification which the aircraft had. The two engines had clean bill of health. Yes, the two contrary to what people were saying...

**If the two engines were cleared/ fine, why did the aircraft crash?**

That is what I am telling you, you see, most of the accidents that happen are never due to technical problems. You see, you have majority of the percentage, 75% is always due to human error. Like I said, it is the command you give the aircraft that the aircraft carries out. If you give a wrong command, it obeys you wrongly.

They will know they are crashing because the aircraft is not behaving the way it should behave. This is purely technical language I used. The aircraft is like a new car. You are driving a new car, the engine oil, the engines, the tyres, everything is perfect, it is moving for you. All of a sudden, something comes across your way. What happens? Rather than pressing the brake, you hit the accelerator. What happens, that is you give a wrong command and the car obeys you. So, in this case, something happens to one of the engines, at the beginning, the aircraft cannot turn back on its own and say let me go back to where I started. He should have returned to where he started. We have had several cases of air returns, but it did not happen in this way. He continued on his journey. Because the captain now knows that he could make Lagos on one engine.

Because eleven nautical miles to Lagos, he declared May Day. Then further on, something happened. He told the co-pilot, we have lost the throttle control, which means the active engine has packed up. And he was seeing the airport but he couldn't get there, the only thing to push it to reach the airport is an engine, and the two engines now went silent. And that is why I was saying that it is very difficult to explain why two engine should pack up in a journey of less than fifty (50) minutes. The engineers find it difficult to explain. Technically, it is difficult to explain because they are both independent of fuel supply.

**Question: If we had set up a technical and administrative panel like for other airlines that experienced air crashes, had similar issues such as Sosoliso and ADC, would they also have had their licenses returned, perhaps?**

Yeah. There are two different scenarios, because in the case of Sosoliso, ADC, those were natural phenomenon. It was wind share. That was clear. Everybody knew it. Windshare happened and the pilot did not know that he was crying. One landed and never got aid on time and couldn't control – Sosoliso. ADC got airborne and couldn't sustain. It ran into a windshare phenomenon and just went off. The two are not similar at all in any way. If you grounded these ones ..if we had found out that there were malpractice in maintenance, then we would hold them.

**Q: Some of the people in Dana Air.. some people call in at a certain time they knew that the plane was faulty. They had complained about the plane and here you are telling them that there was nothing wrong with the plane**

Let Nigerians know that on board that aircraft was an engineer that flew from Lagos to Abuja on board that aircraft. He was going for an assignment in Abuja. He got there and then he dispatched that aircraft back. If it was faulty, if there was anything, he would have reported. Two, what the former, let me use the word, former employees of Dana were not technical people. They would not know the status of the aircraft. So, it is all speculations, to grind the machinery of emotion..to hype it up. It was not so. Because what was available to us, what we found out not what Dana told us, what we found out based on our own experience, because on that Committee, you have four captains, you have two engineers, you have a military pilot who is in the presidential fleet who have experience. We went through the books, we went through their logbooks, there is nothing to hold against the airline, the status of the aircraft. If we still believe that they were holding on not to release the discrepancies with the aircraft to save their job, we found it difficult to believe. Because they are all speculations. People say things to suit a situation but in this case, I wanted to say that at that time all comments, actions by the National Assembly or everybody was not conducive to aviation operations because they scared people from flying.

The chief engineer of Dana was actually flying back from Abuja and he was on that flight. He certainly would not have allowed that aircraft to take off. There is no captain...no airline crew would go on a suicide mission. Francis Ogboro, Dana Air executive while speaking with journalists on Wednesday disclosed that the aircraft underwent strenuous checks.

**September, 6, 2012 – Interview with Mr. Joe Obi, Special Adviser to the Minister of Aviation during a Breakfast Show with Channels TV**

**Q: What's the rationale for the lifting of the operational license of Dana Air?**

First of all I would like to start by saying that our hearts continue to go out to the families of the victims of the Dana Aircrash of June 3rd. we send our condolences and share in their pain and their grief. When the crash happened, it was entirely unexpected. Before it happened, you remember that from 2005, 2006 when we had the last aircrash, from that period we continued to build and consolidate a formidable safety record in the Nigerian Aviation industry, and then suddenly the crash happened. It was entirely unexpected, it was a tragedy, no one knew it would happen. We still feel the pain of families who lost their loved ones. Now, the practice, even internationally, is not to shut down airlines when one aircraft in one of their fleets is involved in an aircrash. But you know, we do not operate in a very robust environment like what obtains in the outside world, I mean more developed countries where their safety records are quite high. So, when this happened, we were rattled, we just needed to sit back a little bit and do a reality check to see whether there were some loopholes in what we have been doing in the system. Because like I said, we were already building up a very formidable safety record in the country from 2006 when we had those last air crisis.

So, we just needed to sit back again and see what went wrong. So, I want to make it very clear that the suspension of the operating license of Dana Airline was never punitive, was never intended to punish the airline. It was supposed to give us an opportunity to sit back again and look at what may have gone wrong.

**Q: By now, people should be asking or a little bit worried about your findings. What did you find to have warranted the re-instatement of the operating license of Dana Air?**

A: Like I stated earlier, the standard norm is not to ground the airlines when the crash happens. What NCAA – the regulatory and oversight authority - did was to go into a kind of technical and administrative, including financial audits of the airlines, to find out whether what went wrong has been rectified. Now, as you all are aware, the investigation into the air crash is still on-going by the Accident and Investigation Bureau (AIB). And you also are aware that reports of air accidents don't come out in a jiffy! They take a while. The preliminary reports indicated that the aircrash happened as a result of the failure of the two engines of the aircraft. That is all we know at least from the AIB report. That investigation is still on-going and as time goes on, we will bring the findings out. But in the meantime, we are satisfied with the technical audit that the airline is airworthy and is ready to go into the air again.

**Q: In your statements which you released yesterday, you said this follows government's satisfaction with the airworthiness of the airline after a rigorous technical, operational and financial audit of the airline. But now you say that standard practice is that when such accidents occur, it is not the procedure to ground the airline but there is nowhere in your statement where you either**

**admitted that the government made a mistake by suspending their operational license temporarily...how do we reconcile all of those.**

A: Government never made a mistake of suspending the operating license of Dana Air. If you remember very well, I said when this accident happened; it rattled everybody it took us by aback. So we just needed to sit back again and take a deeper look at what was happening. What was required at that moment was not to allow the airline to go back into the air. So we needed to really look at ..because.. like I said, we were already building a very formidable safety record in Nigeria from 2006 when we had those unfortunate air crashes, so, this one happened..even if it wasn't the standard norm to ground the airline, we felt, well, the most logical thing to do in that circumstance, to ground the airline and to allow our inspectors and experts to look into the operations of the airline, into the technical details of their aircraft and to find out whether there was something inherently faulty about their operations that may have led to the crash. So, government didn't make a mistake, we just needed to sit back a little bit and take a look their operations and their technical efficiency of their staff and the airworthiness of their fleet. Now, government is satisfied that what they have in their fleets is airworthy and the safety of passengers is assured if they go back to the sky.

**Q: Government's satisfaction is convenient at this time because it seems there are only 2 local airlines in the Nigerian airspace. Do you think that is correct? Were you under any pressure of any sort to bring back Dana nly an simply because ther were 2 airlines left in the airspace.**

A: Not at all. Government was not under any pressure. We were not under any duress. Like I said, we carried out a rigorous technical audit of the airline and came to the conclusion that at this point in time, it is safe to allow them to go back to the sky.

**Q: Nigerians will also like you to really expatiate more and give them a clearer picture why the rush would be the question from most Nigerians if you say that investigations are still on what if at the end of the day, they just realised that it was some kind of negligence on the part of the airlineor the airline causedthe particular crash what would you be saying to the people then. Why not wait for the end of this particular investigation?**

A: Well, I still go back to my former point that it is not the standard practice. Just because we are not operating a very robust environment, that is why we had to take that drastic measure. Now, like I said earlier also, investigations of some air accidents some take a year, some take 2 years, some 3 years, some 4 years. So, you recognise that Dana Air, even before the air crash, although we had some people saying all kinds of stories. But professionally, up to the time of the crash, there was nothing that our investigators and our regulatory bodies, the NCAA had found to be very very effective in their operations. So, once we took that decision, we needed to take a look again at what they are doing. Now, we have done that. We are satisfied that even though we are still expecting the final report, because like I said, we have released the preliminary report, we are still expecting the final report, while that is on-going, the airline needs to go back to air. So, I want to make the point very clear, government was not under any pressure.

**Q: What about the ADC and Sosoliso Airlines, are we going to revisit them or admit that an error was made in time past by not following due process, let's go back to the books and see what we can do about these two**

A: As I speak with you, we do not have any records of those airline indicating their intentions to come back into operations. If those airlines do indicate their intentions to come back, rigorous technical and financial audit of their operation would be conducted. And if it is found satisfactory, why not, they can come back to operate again.

**Q: One of the reactions we saw was that Dana Air said that they were not aware that the ban had been lifted. Is that true – Interviewer**

Well, I won't speak for Dana Air, but I speak for the aviation ministry. What I can tell you is that the temporary suspension of Dana Airline has been lifted. The spokesperson for Dana has a better answer to that. But the most important thing is that the suspension has been lifted. Assuming Dana Air gets back its operations, what is the standard procedure if they were to change their name. Once an airline applies Audit, inspection, certification

**Q: Can you confirm to us that everybody who was affected, the families of the victims have been properly taken care of in terms of compensations.**

A: Well, as you know, issues of compensations take quite a while because a lot of documentations and verifications are required. And, as we speak, that process of verification of claims by families and next-of-kins of victims is ongoing. And I am aware that for those who have satisfied the requirements, claims have been paid.

## APPENDIX 1



Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of all who lost their lives in the Dana Air mishap of Sunday, June 3, 2012.

**May the souls of the departed rest in peace**

» Press Statement

**Helplines:**  
LAGOS:  
01-2809888, 08052697500, 08077291288  
ABUJA:  
07044213849, 07026672145



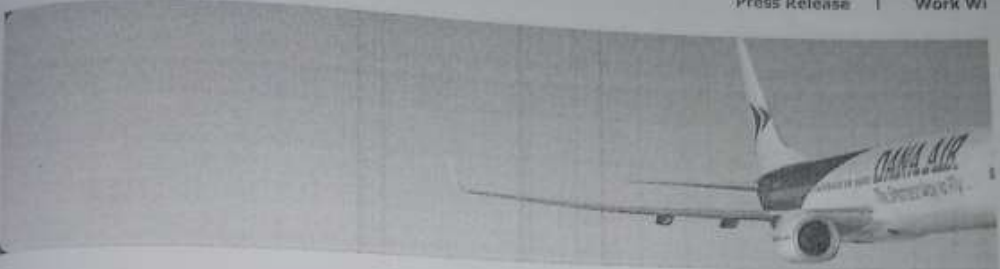
## APPENDIX 2

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**DANA AIR**  
The Smartest Way to Fly

HOME FLIGHT BOOKING MY DA  
Press Release | Work WI



### MEDIA CENTER

#### PRESS STATEMENT ON FLIGHT 9J 992 OF SUNDAY, JUNE 3, 2012.

Lagos | 04th Jun, 2012

The Dana Air family is deeply saddened by the tragic loss of the passengers and crew of Flight 9J-922 of Sunday, June 3, 2012. The aircraft, with Registration Number 5N-RAM, departed Abuja for Lagos with 146 passengers onboard, 1 Dana Air Flight Engineer, 2 Pilots and 4 Cabin Crew were also aboard the flight.

We extend our deepest sympathies to the families and friends of the deceased, and we are doing everything we can to assist them in this extremely difficult time. A 24hr Call Centre service has been initiated and we have also set up an information center at MMA2 to look after their needs and keep them as quickly informed as possible.

An investigation into the cause of the accident got under way immediately, under the guidance of the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), who are being assisted by investigators from the U.S. National Safety Transportation Board (NTSB). Dana Air is cooperating fully and assisting the investigation in every possible way.

In accordance with international protocol governing aviation accident investigations, all information about the investigation will come from the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority. Dana Air will however provide information relating to the flight itself and updates on steps being taken.

Once again, we at Dana Air extend our profoundest condolences.

Jacky Hathiramani  
Chief Executive Officer

1/1/1980



## APPENDIX 3

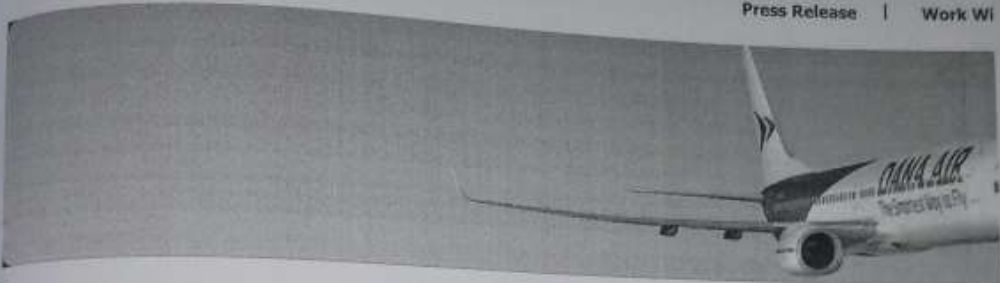
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INTERNET ARCHIVE  
waybackmachine

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3 Jun 2012 - 1 Jul 2014  
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\*About this capture

**DANA AIR**  
The Smartest Way to Fly

HOME FLIGHT BOOKING MY DA  
Press Release | Work Wi



### MEDIA CENTER

#### Dana Air Mishap: Black Box Recovered By Search Teams.

Lagos | 04th Jun, 2012

Dana Air confirms that the Flight Voice Recorder and Black Box from the Boeing MD83 aircraft which was involved in a tragic accident on Sunday, June 3 have been recovered by the joint team comprising the Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB), the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA).

A flight data recorder (FDR) (also ADR, for accident data recorder) is an electronic device employed to record any instructions sent to any electronic systems on an aircraft. It is a device used to record specific aircraft performance parameters. Popularly referred to as a "black box", the data recorded by the FDR is used for accident investigation, as well as for analyzing air safety issues, material degradation and engine performance.

The recovery has raised hopes of finding out the cause of the crash. According to Jacky Hathiramani, CEO of Dana Air, "We are grateful for the progress made by the aviation authorities towards determining the cause of the unfortunate accident and we will continue to offer our full support while the investigations last."

"There are absolutely no words to accurately express our grief and sorrow over this tragedy. We have not only lost some of the most loyal and valued guests of the airline but also eminent citizens, as well as promising young ones, to the accident. We have also lost some of the finest and most dedicated staff that any organisation can dream of."

"Our thoughts and prayers remain with the families and friends of the deceased in these difficult times, and we will continue to do our best to assist them in every way possible. The recovery operation at the site of the accident is proceeding well and 109 bodies had been recovered as at the time of making this statement. Our 24-hour call centre service is still ongoing and we have experienced personnel at the dedicated MMA2 information centre and NCAA desk to attend to any enquiries."

1/1/1980



Dana Air Flight 9J 992, flying from Abuja to Lagos, crashed on 15th June 2012. The Boeing MD83 registration number is NAW-146. Passengers onboard: 109 men, 26 women, 5 children. A Dana Air Flight Engineer, 2 Pilots and 4 Cabin Crew were also aboard the aircraft.

8 Jun 2012 - 1 Jul 2014

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\*About this capture

The flight captain had a record of 18,500 flight hours and had already flown 7,100 hours on Boeing MD83 aircrafts. The First Officer had flown 1,100 flight hours, 800 of which on the MD83 aircraft. Both pilots' licenses are current and are verifiable with the NCAA.

The aircraft had totalled over 60,000 flight hours and, with total cycles of over 35,000. Its last 400-hourly check (A-Check) was on May 30, 2012 while the statutory annual maintenance (C-Check) is not until September 2012. The Certificate of Airworthiness issued by the NCCA after the last C-Check was still very valid as at the time of the incident.

Dana Air began scheduled flights on November 10, 2008 and has operated over 18,933 flights, carrying over 1,600,366 passengers in the process. The airline currently has 5 Boeing MD83 aircrafts in its fleet, all fully insured for the passengers and aircrafts by a company based in the UK, who are currently on their way to Lagos.

The company is professionally managed and adheres strictly to the maintenance schedule for all its aircrafts as prescribed by the manufacturers, and the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority. More detailed and scheduled checks are, however, carried out at MRO maintenance facilities abroad.

"We are grateful to his Excellency, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Honourable Minister of Aviation, Princess Stella Oduah, the Executive Governor of Lagos State, Dr. Babatunde Raji Fashola for their exemplary leadership during this dark moment in the life of our great nation", said Hathiramani.

"We appreciate the solidarity of all Nigerians and we join everyone in praying for comfort for the families and friends of the victims and may the souls of all the departed rest in peace."



## APPENDIX 4

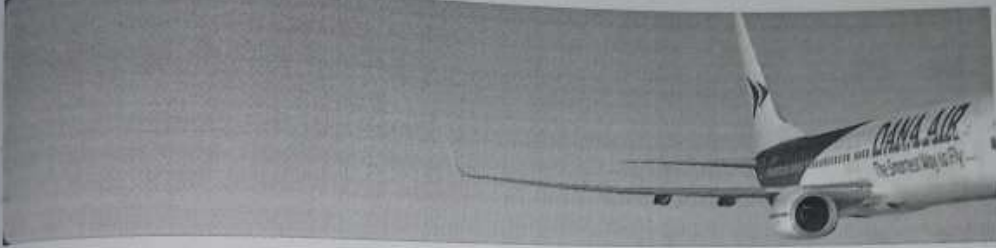
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### MEDIA CENTER

#### Dana Air Condoles With Families Of The Departed.

Lagos | 05th June, 2012

Chairman of Dana Air, Ramesh Hathiramani, today met with the families of victims of the June 3, 2012 air mishap involving Flight 9J-992 from Lagos to Abuja in which all 153 persons onboard lost their lives.

Hathiramani addressed the family members of the departed who gathered at the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital, Ikeja morgue where the remains of victims recovered from the site of the accident were taken. "Words are not enough to express our grief at this tragedy and we want you to know that our thoughts and prayers are with you in this extremely difficult period."

Hathiramani listened patiently as they shared their pain and difficulties in locating and retrieving the remains of their loved ones, and promised that the airline would do everything possible to ensure that their concerns are handled. "When you do have a fatality, it is your responsibility to step up to the plate", he said.

The Dana Air Chairman also visited the site of the accident (his second in 3 days) to commiserate with the affected families and residents. He commended the officials of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) for the progress made so far in the recovery operation. About 151 bodies have been recovered.

The information centre set up at MMA2 and NCAA news desk are still open to cater to the needs of families and relatives, and keep them as quickly informed as possible. Our Help-lines are: LAGOS - 01-2809888, 08052697500 & 08077291288 and Abuja - 07044213849 & 07026672145.

Dana Air appreciates the solidarity of all Nigerians and we join everyone in continued prayers for comfort for the families and friends of the victims, and also for the repose of the souls of all the departed.

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Appendix 4.htm

APPENDIX 5



## APPENDIX 6

DANA AIR

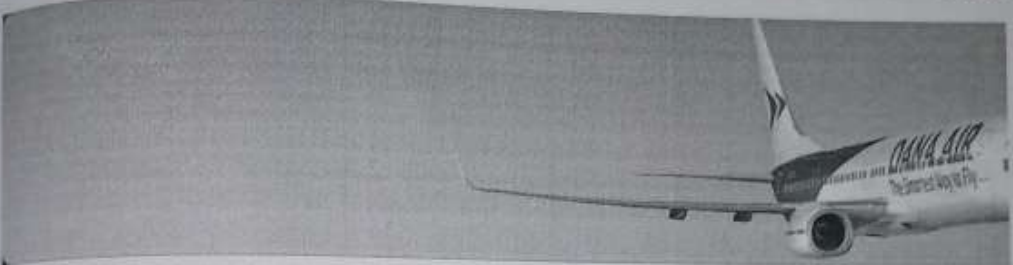
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### MEDIA CENTER

#### CEO ADDRESS.

Lagos | 07th June, 2012

COMMENTS MADE BY JACKY HATHIRAMANI CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF DANA AIRLINES LIMITED AT A PRESS CONFERENCE ON THE DANA AIR ACCIDENT OF SUNDAY, JUNE 3, 2012 HELD ON THURSDAY, JUNE 7, 2012 AT THE SKYLINE HOTEL, IKEJA, LAGOS.

It is with a heavy heart that I address you today following the tragic accident of Sunday, June 3, 2012 involving Dana Air Flight 9J 992 with Registration Number 5N-RAM, in which 153 persons onboard and 10 persons at the site of the accident lost their lives.

There are absolutely no words to accurately express our grief and sorrow over this tragedy.

Our thoughts and prayers remain with the families and friends of the departed, the Iju-Ishaga community and all Nigerians in this difficult time. We will continue to do our best to assist them in every way possible.

Shortly after the accident, we opened a 24 hour Call Centre service (please see numbers below) and dedicated information centre at Murtala Muhammed Airport Terminal 2 (MMA2) in Lagos.

At this time, all of the senior management team of Dana Air is focused on providing assistance to the families, and also fully cooperating with the authorities carrying out the investigation. As yet the cause of the accident remains unknown.

Our chairman, Mr Ramesh Hathiramani, has been to the site of the accident several times to commiserate with the families of those affected and the wider community. Relief materials are being arranged for those displaced as a result of the unfortunate incident. Yesterday afternoon, senior management representatives from Dana Air took part in a press conference at the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital, to update the families on the current situation. We are grateful to his Excellency, Mr President, the Governor of Lagos State and the Honourable Minister of Aviation, for their

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## Appendix 7

Excerpts from Channels TV news report on the plane crash on June 8, 2012. The management of Dana Airline, led by its CEO, Jacky Hathiramani and Director of Flight Operations, Capt. Oscar Wason addressed a press conference on the crash.

“We are as determined to get to the bottom of this to find out exactly what happened , and we will and when it is known, we will share this with you,” Jacky Hathiramani had said.

Speaking on speculations surrounding the plane crash, Capt. Wason had this to say:

“The only way that aircraft could have crashed if it lost both engines. They are speculations. At this point in time, we don’t even know. The cause of the crash the flight data recorder and voice recorder have been retrieved from the crash and sent abroad for investigation...

### **Q: Did the regulators do their jobs?**

**A:** The NCAA do perform audits on the airline unannounced. They can do an audit every week, every month, it all depends. It is independently done and we are not advised when they are coming. This aircraft was not the one that had any technical malfunction in Uyo or it was grounded. Two days, prior, the aircraft was in a scheduled maintenance called the A-checks and thereafter the aircraft was released for flight. The previous aircraft that everybody is referring to that had declared an emergency is a different aircraft which is 5N-SRI and that aircraft is momentarily in Istanbul going through its heavy annual compulsory C-Check.

While debunking rumours of the age of the aircraft being the cause of the crash, Hathiramani said:

“Captain Peter Waxton, First Officer, Mahendra Rathore, Jane, Uche, Onyi and Eke we all knew them so well. Our thoughts and prayers remain with the families and friends of the departed. We will continue to do our best to assist them in every way possible. Jacky Hathiramani in an emotion-laden voice attempts

“The brand of airplane as you know was an MD-80 there are nearly 900 of these flying currently internationally. More than half of them are owned and operated by American Airlines and Delta Airlines. In fact their average age of their fleet of those aircrafts are even more than ours and even the age of our fleet is not considered to be any short because even within the country here you have airlines flying even more than the age of this aircraft.”

## APPENDIX 8

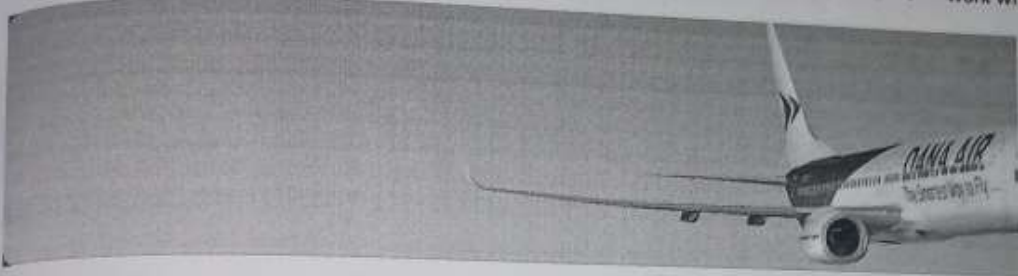
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### MEDIA CENTER

#### Dana Air MD83 Registration 5N-RAM

Lagos | 08th June, 2012

At Dana Air, the safety of our passengers and crew is of paramount importance.

The aircraft involved in the accident, a Boeing MD83 (Registration Number 5N-RAM), was maintained correctly and fully in accordance with the manufacturers schedule and directives from the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority.

It had its last 400-hourly check (A-Check) on 30th May, 2012. The statutory annual maintenance (C-Check) was not due until September 2012. The Certificate of Airworthiness issued by the NCCA after its last C-Check was completely valid as at the time of the accident.

We adhere strictly to the maintenance schedule of all our aircraft as prescribed by the manufacturers, and the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority. Dana Air has a maintenance agreement with MyTechnic - an international, world-class aviation maintenance organisation (MRO) which is located at our Lagos base. It performs and supervises all local maintenance tasks including the daily servicing and release of our aircraft for operations. Our heavy scheduled maintenance checks (i.e. C-checks) are done by leading MRO companies overseas.

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**MEDIA CENTER**

**Dana Air Donates Relief Materials To Crash Victims--As Counselors, Psychotherapists Visit Affected Families**

Lagos | 09th June, 2012

Top management of Dana Air, Friday, donated relief materials to families affected by the Dana Air mishap of Sunday, June 3, 2012 at Iju-ishaga area of Lagos State. This is just as the airline deployed a team of counselors and psychotherapists to assist and manage trauma, anxiety and associated ailments of families affected by the incident.

In his remark during the visit, Gautam Hathiramani, a Director at Dana Air, said "there is no way to sufficiently express our sadness over this tragic incident that has brought tears to the eyes of many. Little children have been orphaned and many have lost their properties to the accident."

"Our hearts are with you in this trying period and we will continue to do everything we can to support you. We are making arrangements for accommodation shortly, and we will ensure that all who have lost their properties in the unfortunate incident get their dues", he said.

Since the unfortunate incident last Sunday, the Chairman, Directors and management officials of the company have made several visits to the crash site to condole with the affected families and the Iju-ishaga community at large. The provision of relief materials, the company has said, will be a continuous exercise.

Materials distributed include mattresses, blankets, food items, clothes and kitchen utensils, among others.

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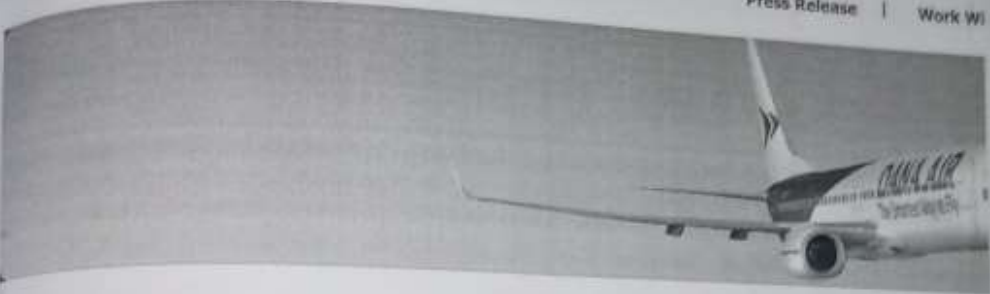
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### MEDIA CENTER

#### One Week On

Lagos | 10th Jun, 2012

It is one week since the tragic accident of Dana Air Flight 992, and the thoughts and prayers of everyone at the airline remain with the families and friends of those who lost their lives.

Senior management representatives from Dana Air, along with specially trained counselors and psychotherapists, have been visiting the families of the departed.

We are liaising closely with the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital to ensure that the identification procedures can be completed as quickly as possible so that the families can lay their loved ones to rest.

We have put in place an assistance programme for the 41 residents of Iju-Ishaga community who lost their homes as a result of the accident, and have been visiting, in hospital, the four residents who were injured.

We are arranging temporary accommodation for them all, and are providing materials such as beds, blankets food items and cooking utensils.

Safety is, and has always been, of paramount importance to everyone at Dana Air. We are continuing to offer complete cooperation and assistance to the Accident Investigation Bureau in their investigation, and we will continue do so for as long as they require.

Dana Air will continue to offer the families assistance, and will provide further updates when possible.

24 hour assistance contact numbers:  
LAGOS: 01-2809888 & 08052697500 & 08077291288  
ABUJA: 07044213849 & 07028672145

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## APPENDIX 11

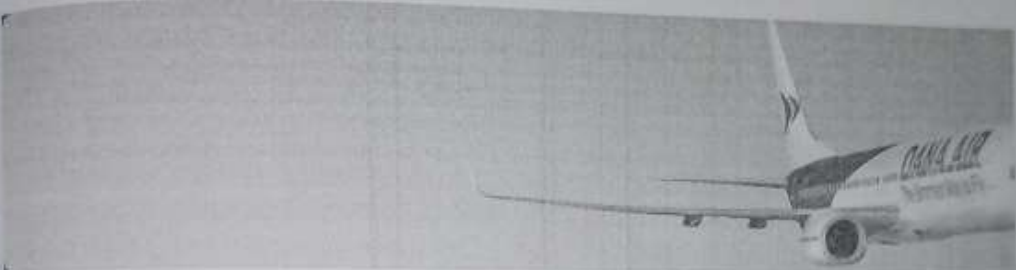
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### MEDIA CENTER

#### Dana Air Officials Visit The Injured At LASUTH, Promise To Cover Medical Expenses

Lagos | 10th Jun, 2012

As part of its effort to bring succor to those who were injured during Dana Air mishap of Sunday, June 3, 2012, the management of Dana Air have been visiting the injured victims admitted at the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH), Ikeja.

Speaking during a recent visit, a Director of the company, Gautam Hathiramani, said that the airline is deeply saddened by the unfortunate incident. He empathized with the injured and their relatives, and promised that the airline will continue to offer its assistance to ensure they fully recover to live their normal lives again.

Hathiramani also said that Dana Air will offset the medical bill of all four patients who suffered varying degrees of injury as a result of the accident, and that services of counselors and psychotherapists have been deployed to help manage their trauma, anxieties and fear.

Since the incident, the Chairman, Directors and top management officials of the Dana Air have continued to pay visits to the displaced persons at Iju-Ishaga and also the injured who are receiving medical care in LASUTH. The airline is also providing relief materials on a continuous basis.

Crisis Information Centre:  
3 toll-free numbers have been opened at 0809 993 7312, 0809 993 7313, 0809 993 7314 for calls from Nigeria.

NB: We ask journalists not to call these numbers, which are reserved for families and close relatives.

## APPENDIX 12

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### MEDIA CENTER

#### Dana Air Affirms Cooperation With LASEMA On Welfare Of Displaced Iju-Ishaga Residents

Lagos | 11th June, 2012

Dana Air confirmed that it will work together with the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA). This is to ensure that residents of Iju-Ishaga community who were displaced as a result of the Dana Air accident of Sunday, 3 June 2012 are properly cared for.

The airline affirmed its support for LASEMA, an organ of the Lagos State Government set up primarily to coordinate activities of all relevant government Ministries/Agencies including NGOs in disaster management, at a stakeholder meeting held on Monday 11 June, 2012.

"We are grateful to the Lagos State Governor, Babatunde Raji Fashola, for his leadership and personal involvement since the tragedy, and we continue to work together with LASEMA to provide the necessary aid and assistance to all the displaced families at the state relief camp at Ayobo-Ipaja, Lagos State", said Tony Usidamen, Head - Corporate Communications of the airline.

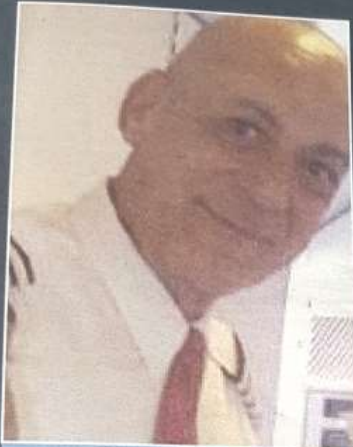
Dana Air remains focused on offering assistance to all those who were affected by the June 3 accident. The Chairman, Directors and management officials of the Dana Air have been visiting the 45 displaced Iju-Ishaga residents, including 4 persons currently receiving treatment at the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital, Ikeja.

Dana Air will continue to make every possible effort to assist the families of all those affected.

24 hour assistance numbers:  
LAGOS: 01-2809888 & 08052697500 & 08077291288  
ABUJA: 07044213849 & 07026672145  
3 toll-free numbers have been opened at 0809 993 7312, 0809 993 7313, 0809 993 7314 for calls from Nigeria

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APPENDIX 13



Peter Waxton  
Captain



Mahendra Rathore  
Co-Pilot



Widyo Utomo  
Engineer



Onyinye Mgbangwa  
Cabin Crew



Vivienne Atangakak  
Cabin Crew



Uche Ulasi  
Cabin Crew



Eke Godwin  
Cabin Crew

# ANGELS IN THE SKY

You served with humility and flew with pride.  
You will forever be missed

Dana Air Management & Staff



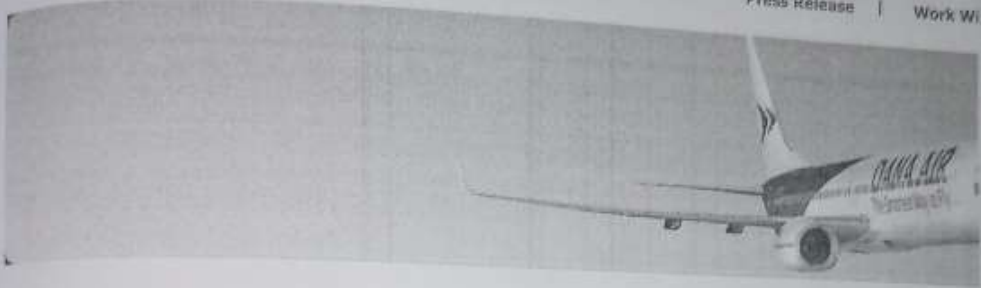
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**MEDIA CENTER**

**Dana Air Gears Up For Prompt Payment Of Claims**  
Lagos | 14th June, 2012

Dana Air has put structures in place to ensure prompt payment of benefits to families of those who lost their lives in the tragic accident of Sunday, June 3, 2012. Consequently, it has opened three dedicated toll-free lines, manned by well trained personnel, solely for claims administration and payment procedures.

Within 24hrs of the unfortunate incident, the airline had set up a Crisis Management Center at the Murtala Muhammed Airport Terminal 2 (MMA2) to assist families and relatives of victims with useful information. The airline's decision to open dedicated toll-free lines, said Jacky Hathiramani, Chief Executive Officer of Dana Air, is to make it easier for the bereaved to get necessary details on payment of claims.

Teams comprising Dana Air officials and trained counselors have been visiting the families to condole with them, as well as to provide information on requirements for speedy payment of benefits to the next-of-kin.

"We appreciate that no level of compensation will bring back your much loved one. Nevertheless, we are making arrangements as quickly as possible to compensate every bereaved family in accordance with the law that governs tragedies such as this, and in honor of our duty to you and others", a letter signed by Hathiramani to the families of the deceased stated.

Hathiramani also stated, "We do not imagine that this will make up for the pains that you are going through but we, however, hope that this lessens your pain knowing that you are not alone in those difficult times."

Dana Air insurers, a London consortium, are already well advanced in the payment process, and the first (interim) payments should be made shortly to the families of those passengers who lost their lives. Also urgent steps have been taken by the insurers to identify the families of the Iju-Ishaga community.

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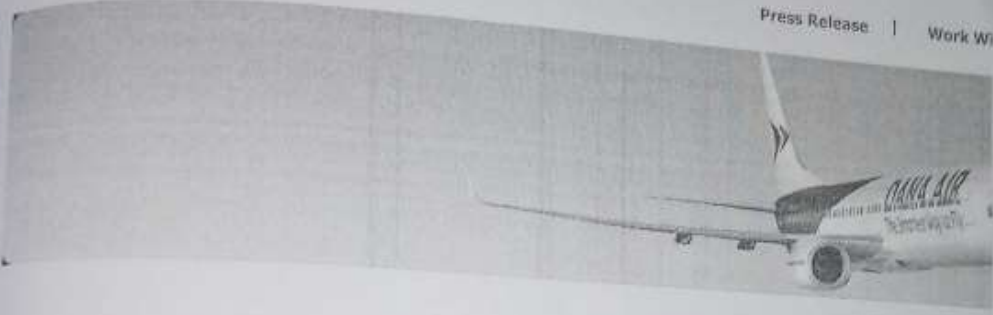
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### MEDIA CENTER

#### Calling On Families To Come Forward With Next-Of-Kin Details

Lagos | 14th June, 2012

Dana Air has today made fresh efforts to support families with their insurance claims following the tragic accident of 3rd June, 2012. The company calls on relatives of the deceased, some of whom they have had difficulties reaching out to, to please come forward with details of the next-of-kin for insurance purposes.

Dana Air has set up Crisis Management Centres with dedicated toll-free lines that are manned by well-trained professionals to lend assistance to the next-of-kin. However the company was keen to do even more to ensure that those affected were fully aware of the insurance process and the documentation required.

The company fully realizes how painful this is for the families, and fully recognizes the need to handle this process promptly and sensitively. We do not imagine that this will make up for the pains that you are going through but the company will continue to make every possible effort to assist all those affected.

The thoughts and prayers of everyone at Dana Air remain with you at this time.

24 hour assistance contact numbers:

LAGOS: 01-2809888 & 08052697500 & 08077291288

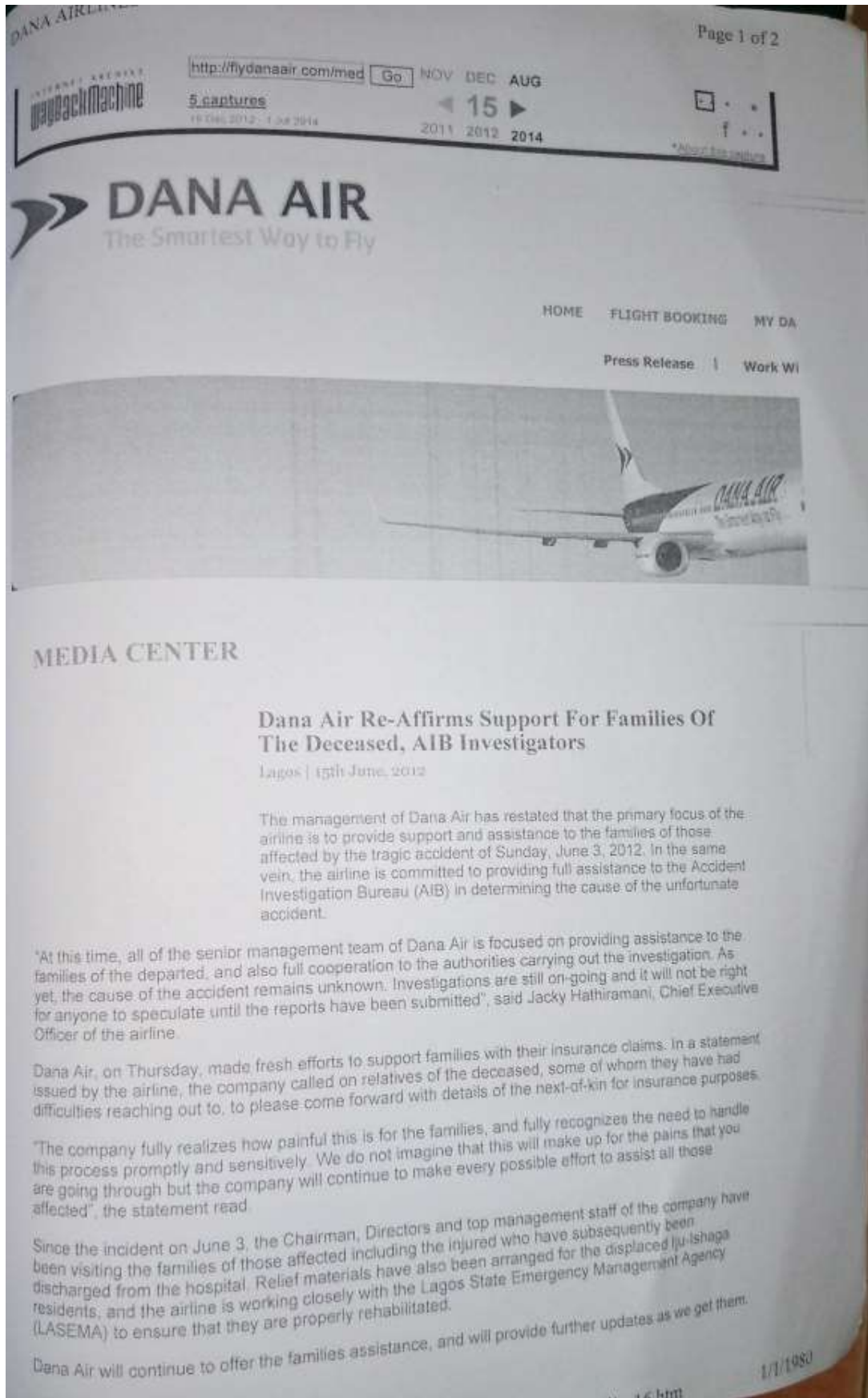
ABUJA: 07044213849 & 07026672145

Toll-free numbers have been opened at 0809 993 7312, 0809 993 7313, 0809 993 7314 for calls from Nigeria

NB: We ask journalists not to call these numbers, which are reserved for families and close relatives.

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APPENDIX 16



APPENDIX 17

PUNCH

FRIDAY, JUNE 15, 2012 57



**DANA AIR**

**All of us at Dana Air are deeply saddened by the tragic accident of Flight 992 on Sunday 3rd June, 2012.**

**Our most heartfelt thoughts and prayers continue to be with the families and friends of those who lost their lives, and anyone else whose lives have been touched by this tragedy.**

**The Management and Staff of Dana Air**

**24 hour family assistance contact numbers:**  
**LAGOS: 01-2809888 & 08052697500 & 08077291288**  
**ABUJA: 07044213849 & 07026672145**

**In addition, 3 toll-free numbers have been opened for calls from within Nigeria:**  
**0809 993 7312 & 0809 993 7313 & 0809 993 7314**



APPENDIX 18



## APPENDIX 19

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**MEDIA CENTER**

**Dana Air: Joint Senate And House Of Representatives Public Hearing**  
Lagos | 22nd June, 2012

In response to the invitation by the joint Senate and House of Representative public hearing on the Dana Air accident of Sunday, June 3, 2012 and allied air accidents, top management officials of the airline are in Abuja to provide answers to the committee's questions and to reaffirm the company's commitment to providing all possible assistance to the investigating authorities, as well as support for families of the victims.

Chief Executive Officer, Jacky Hathiramani, Director of Flight Operations, Captain Oscar Wason and Head – Quality, Dave Sambo are among officials who have been attending the hearings, with Mr Hathiramani reading a formal statement to the committee (copied below).

Dana Air continues to work around the clock with our insurers and the relevant authorities to ensure that the families of the victims are able to process insurance claims. As at this time, the airline has received 20 fully completed claim forms from families, and will provide a daily update on the number of claims that are being processed and the payments that have been made.

To facilitate the completion of claims forms by the families the airline has established toll free lines to a crisis management centre to provide assistance, and it will continue to provide this service until all claims have been addressed and settled. The company has also published adverts in the national dailies requesting families whom it has had difficulty reaching to come forward with details of the next of kin, for prompt payment of benefits.

24 hour assistance contact numbers:  
LAGOS: 01-2809888 & 08052697500 & 08077291288  
ABUJA: 07044213849 & 07026672145

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NB: We ask journalists not to call these numbers, which are reserved for families and close relatives of the victims.

Press Desk: Toll-free lines 0809 993 7309, 0809 993 7311

#### Statement

Distinguished and Honourable Chairmen of the Senate and House Joint Committee on Aviation

Distinguished and Honourable members of the committee on aviation Members of the press

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen

1. As operators of the aircraft, we have been in shock since the tragic events of 3rd June. We would like to first of all extend our deepest condolences and sympathies to the families and friends of those who lost their lives. It is so painful and we are also still hurting like all households across Nigeria. We too lost some friends on board as well as some of our best crew on that ill-fated flight. We wish to re-iterate our commitment to the families and to all Nigerians to do everything within our power to ensure that the facts are thoroughly investigated and appropriate action taken to ensure such a tragedy can never happen again.
2. We are cooperating fully with the AIB and have provided them with all aircraft technical maintenance logs and records, as well as crew licences and other relevant training details. These remain in the custody and control of the AIB.
3. The AIB has not shared any of the information that it has with us yet about their investigation and as a result we are limited in the facts that we can provide. However, we have provided a summary of the information that we are able to give you at this point.
4. The aircraft had operated earlier in the day as flight 9J 999, departing Lagos at 0831 am local time with 135 passengers to Abuja;
5. The Aircraft then returned from Abuja to Lagos as flight 9J 998 at 1024 am with 141 passengers on board;
6. The aircraft operated as Flight 9J 993 from Lagos to Abuja with 141 passengers at 1251 hours;
7. The aircraft was returning from Abuja to Lagos as Flight 9J 992 at 1458 hours with 153 passengers and crew when the tragic incident occurred.
8. The make and type of the aircraft involved in the accident was a Boeing MD 83;
9. The aircraft involved had no reported defects throughout the period of operation before the tragic incident;
10. The aircraft had even operated five flights in the previous day (June 2, 2012);
11. The pilots of the flight held current Licenses and Class 1 medicals. The cabin crew were well trained on handling emergency situations in the cabin. Everything was as per regulations and in accordance with the law.
12. Following the incident, Standard Airline Emergency Response Procedures were initiated and an information hotline and family support centres were immediately established. Crisis Management Centres have been since set up by us in Lagos and Abuja to offer support to all affected and to offer counselling, plus toll free numbers and other contacts have been circulated and announced for families to contact for information and assistance. We are working closely with the LASUTH CMD and the Honourable Commissioner of Special Duties for Lagos State, and the LASEMA team to coordinate with family members to console with them.
13. Since the incident took place we have focused on two key priorities. The first is to ensure that we adhere to and where possible exceed all regulatory requirements, co-operating fully with the authorities to provide all necessary information that could provide any insight into the cause of the accident. The second is to provide as much support for the families of the victims as we can. We will continue to do so for as long as is necessary.
14. Alongside our commitment to providing all necessary information and support to the AIB, we are, and will continue to be fully committed to ensuring that the process required to ensure payment of just and fair compensation to the families of the victims will be implemented. We are working closely with the authorities to ensure that this process runs as smoothly as possible. Advance payments will be made to those relatives who come forward within 30 days of the accident and thereafter.

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**MEDIA CENTER**

**Dana Air – Daily Update**  
Tag: | 2011 | 2012

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In order to provide up to date information on the status of the ongoing response by Dana Air to the tragic accident of June 3, 2012, the company is providing a daily update to the media and on our website.

**Response to media coverage**

-Dana Air would like to respond to media coverage suggesting that the airline was operating a free seating policy at the time of the accident and categorically that our free seating policy was halted in August 2011 and, except on very rare occasions where flights were combined, Dana Air has since operated an allocated seating system, which was the case with flight 5J-992 of Sunday, June 3, 2012.

-Dana Air would also like to respond to media speculation that the company did not have the requisite insurance or was behind on its insurance premium payments. Dana Air has all required insurance cover and was fully up to date with policy payments. Dana Air's insurers are:

- o Nigeria: Prestige Assurance Plc is Lead Underwriter
- o International: Lloyds of London

o The flight had two levels of cover, US\$4.5 million for the value of the plane and US\$350 million for third party liabilities.

-Dana Air would also like to confirm, contrary to some media reports, that the company is leaving no stone unturned towards the rehabilitation of the displaced Iju-Ishaga residents. Initial steps have been taken to provide relief materials and the company is currently working with the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) to provide proper accommodation, and other forms of aid, as soon as possible. Steps have also been taken to assess loss/damage to properties, and adequate compensation will soon be made to affected residents.

**Company activity**

- Investigations into the cause of the accident is still on-going and Dana Air continues to offer every form of assistance to the investigating authorities.

- On identification and release of bodies to the families, Dana Air continues to engage with the Lagos State Government and the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital to ensure that the process is expedited so that families can lay their loved ones to rest. As per last update on Friday, 22nd June, 98% of DNA samples had been successfully collected and dispatched to a UK laboratory for testing while the remainder will be sent today.

**Insurance and contact with the families of the victims**

- The company has now made direct contact with 103 of the 112 families who lost loved ones in the accident and have also made contact with the 6 embassies managing communications with the families of those victims from other countries. These families and embassies have been sent letters of condolence and the insurance documentation necessary in order to facilitate compensation payments.

- As of the close of business on Friday June 25, the company had received completed insurance forms for 34 of the victims, 2 of which are our staff members.

-NCAA guidelines require that, where possible, initial compensation payments be made within 30 days of the accident taking place.

-NCAA guidelines set the compensation level at US\$100,000 per victim.

-The Company continues to work around the clock with our insurers and the relevant authorities to ensure that the families of the victims are able to process insurance claims.

To facilitate the completion of claims forms by the families the company has established toll free lines to a direct management centre to provide assistance. The company will continue to provide this service until all claims have been addressed and settled.

**Reprints**

24 hour assistance contact numbers for families are  
LAGOS: 01-2805888, 08052697800 & 08077291298

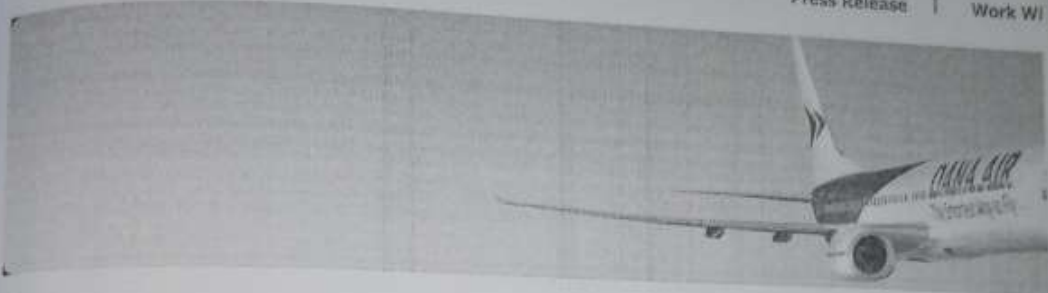
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### MEDIA CENTER

#### Dana Air – Daily Update

Lagos | 26th June, 2012

In order to provide up to date information on the status of the ongoing response by Dana Air to the tragic accident of June 3, 2012, the company is providing a daily update to the media and on our website.

#### Response to media coverage

- Dana Air would like to respond to media coverage suggesting that expatriate staff of the airline have left the company's employment since the accident. Of the over 450 staff of the airline, most of whom are Nigerians, not one has left the company's employment. Dana Air is committed to finding out the cause of the unfortunate accident and some of our expatriate staff are among the airline's officials currently assisting the investigating authorities in this regard. All Dana Air staff are voluntarily assisting in one way or the other, especially with respect to visiting the affected families and providing information on processing of insurance claims.

#### Company activity

- Investigations into the cause of the accident is still on-going and Dana Air continues to offer every form of assistance to the investigating authorities
- Dana Air shares in the pains of the affected families and continues to offer every form of assistance required by the hospital authorities and overseas laboratory to ensure that the process is completed as soon as possible, so that the families can lay their loved ones to rest. As per last update on Friday, 22nd June, 98% of DNA samples had been successfully collected and dispatched to a UK laboratory for testing.

#### Insurance and contact with the families of the victims

- The company has now made direct contact with 118 families who lost loved ones in the accident and have also made contact with the 9 embassies managing communications with the families of those

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### MEDIA CENTER

#### Dana Air – Daily Update

Lagos | 27th June, 2012

In order to provide up to date information on the status of the ongoing response by Dana Air to the tragic accident of June 3, 2012, the company is providing a daily update to the media and on our website.

Company activity

- Investigations into the cause of the accident are ongoing and Dana Air continues to co-operate fully with and offer all support to the investigating authorities.
- Dana Air shares the pain felt by the families of the victims and continues to offer all possible assistance to the hospital management and the overseas laboratory responsible for managing the process of identifying the victims. As per last update received from the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital on 22nd June, 98% of the required DNA samples had been sent to a UK Laboratory for testing.
- Dana Air, today, met with officials of LASEMA regarding plans to provide proper accommodation for the displaced Iju-Ishaga residents, and we can confirm that machinery has been set in motion to resolve this as quickly as possible. The company is also in contact with members of the community who lost properties as a result of the incident and has given assurances that adequate compensation will be paid to them as soon as possible; updates on steps being taken will be given directly to all affected persons on a regular basis.

Insurance and contact with the families of the victims

- The company has now made direct contact with 119 of the 120 families who lost loved ones in the accident and have also made contact with the 9 embassies managing communications with the families of those victims from other countries. These families and embassies have been sent letters of condolence and the insurance documentation necessary in order to facilitate compensation payments.
- As of the Close of business on Monday, June 26, the company had received completed insurance forms for 37 of the victims; 2 of which are our staff members.

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**MEDIA CENTER**

**Dana Air – Daily Update**  
Topic: Update June, 2012

**Newsletter Update**  
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In order to provide up to date information on the status of the ongoing response by Dana Air to the tragic accident of June 3, 2012, the company is providing a daily update to the media and on our website.

**Company activity**

- Investigations into the cause of the accident are ongoing and Dana Air continues to co-operate fully with and offer all support to the investigating authorities.
- Officials of Dana Air, today, met with the displaced Iju-Ishaga residents to brief them on the progress made so far in securing proper accommodation, and also to get their feedback. The feedback will form the basis for a meeting with the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) on Friday, June 29 to finalise the process.
- Insurance and contact with the families of the victims
  - The company has now made direct contact with 119 of the 120 families who lost loved ones in the accident and have also made contact with the 9 embassies managing communications with the families of those victims from other countries. These families and embassies have been sent letters of condolence and the insurance documentation necessary in order to facilitate compensation payments.
  - As of the close of business on Thursday, June 28, the company had received completed insurance forms for 50 of the victims, 4 of which are our staff members.
- To facilitate the completion of claims forms by the families, the company has established toll free lines to a claims management centre to provide assistance. The company will continue to provide this service until all claims have been addressed and settled.

**Helpline**

24-hour assistance contact numbers for families are:

LAGOS: 01-2603888, 08052697500 & 08077291288

ABUJA: 07044213849 & 07026672145


**Media enquiries**

The lead company spokesperson for all media enquiries is Mr Tony Usidanmen. He will be available daily on the following numbers to respond to specific enquiries.

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**Nigeria**

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## APPENDIX 24



**PRESS STATEMENT ON THE LIFTING OF THE SUSPENSION ON DANA AIR OPERATIONS  
BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

The management and the over 558 staff of Dana Air wish to express our deepest appreciation to the Federal Government of Nigeria over the lifting of the suspension of the airline's operations with effect from Wednesday, September 5, 2012, following government's satisfaction with the air-worthiness of the airline after a rigorous technical, operational and financial audit.

We also wish to thank all Nigerians and our esteemed guests for your prayers since the tragic accident of Sunday, June 3, 2012. Our thoughts and prayers will always be with the families that lost loved ones; we remain committed to assisting them in every way possible and also fulfilling our obligations to them fully as stipulated by the law.

The provision of safe, reliable world-class air transport services has always been our focus at Dana Air and we will continue to adhere strictly to safety procedures as required by the Nigerian Civil Aviation Act and all other relevant local and international regulations, as we resume flight operations shortly.

Counseling services available to any relative who would like to avail this service. Private sessions can be arranged and this is only a phone call away.  
**Toll-free numbers:**  
0809 993 7312, 0809 993 7313, 0809 993 7314