# Artificial Intelligence Adoption and Crisis Communication Effectiveness among Media Stakeholders in Port Harcourt

**By**

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**Abstract**

This study examined artificial intelligence adoption and crisis communication effectiveness among media stakeholders in Port Harcourt. Specifically, study sort to understand how media practitioners, public relations officers, digital content managers, and related communication actors use artificial intelligence tools in crisis information gathering, verification, message development, audience monitoring, and response management. The study adopted a qualitative interpretive research design, using thematic analysis to examine views drawn from relevant media and communication stakeholders. Findings showed that artificial intelligence improves crisis communication effectiveness through faster information processing, early detection of public concerns, message targeting, misinformation tracking, and audience sentiment monitoring. Further findings revealed major barriers to adoption and use of AI including limited technical skills, weak institutional policy, poor access to advanced digital tools, unreliable data quality, ethical concerns, and fear of overdependence on automated systems. The study concluded that artificial intelligence can strengthen crisis communication when used as a supportive professional tool rather than as a replacement for editorial judgment and human decision-making. The study recommended that recommended regular training for media stakeholders, development of organisational AI policies, investment in verification tools, stronger ethical guidelines, and collaboration between media organisations, public agencies, and technology experts to improve responsible AI use in crisis communication.

**Keywords**: Artificial intelligence, adoption, crisis communication, effectiveness, media stakeholders,

## INTRODUCTION

The deliberate use, integration and routine use of intelligent computational systems in organizational work processes is called artificial intelligence adoption. In media practice it encompasses the application of machine learning, natural language processing, automated monitoring, recommendation systems, transcription tools, translation systems, generative writing support and data-driven verification tools in the production and dissemination of news. The Scholars describe AI as no longer marginal to journalism, but a factor that is influencing how news is discovered, created, delivered, customized and consumed (Broussard et al., 2019; Lewis et al., 2019; Guzman & Lewis, 2020). Media organizations have a responsibility to be ready for the information disorder, public anxiety, data overload, and

changing audience behaviour – and to do so in a timely manner – while also being accurate, transparent, and exercising professional judgment (Diakopoulos, 2020; de-Lima-Santos & Ceron, 2022; Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024).

Crisis communication effectiveness is the degree of timeliness, accuracy, credibility, empathy, coordination and uncertainty reduction of communication during crises. It's usually measured by how quickly a message is delivered, the clarity of the message, trust, safeguarding reputation, audience engagement and the ability to correct misinformation. Research on crisis communication has revealed that digital platforms have transformed the way publics respond to a crisis, as they are looking for, sharing and asking questions about a crisis in real time (Jin et al., 2014; Eriksson, 2018; Cheng, 2019). In this context, AI can assist media actors in tracking weak signals, recognizing emerging rumours, discerning sentiment changes, interpreting messages, summarizing vast amounts of information, and creating draft advisories for human review (Chon & Kim, 2022; Zhan, 2025).

Media stakeholders in Port Harcourt are faced with a complex information landscape, influenced by political, oil and gas related, environmental, public health, community conflict, security issues and a rapidly growing social media terrain. At times of crisis, stakeholders like journalists, editors, broadcasters, digital content managers, public relations officers, media educators and communication officers need to communicate in ways that meet professional standards and public expectations. While existing studies in Nigeria have indicated journalists are aware of the benefits of AI, the adoption is inconsistent, with some newsrooms reporting challenges in training, infrastructure, and organizational policies and ethical preparedness (Guanah et al., 2020). Findings across other contexts in the Global South suggest that journalists are generally positive about how AI can improve their efficiency but are also worried about its accuracy, bias, job displacement, transparency, and low institutional support (Jamil, 2021; Soto-Sanfiel et al., 2022).

Literature on AI in journalism largely focusses on news production, rather than directly on the impact of AI adoption on crisis communication effectiveness (Broussard et al., 2019; Gutierrez Lopez et al., 2023; Cools & Koliska, 2024). Also, the studies on crisis communication have been very focused on social media of aspect crisis response, dialogue with audience, and reputation recovery, but have tended to be less focused on the way that AI tools alter professional judgment, gatekeeping and ethical responsibility of the crisis communicator (Eriksson, 2018; Du Plessis, 2018; Cheng, 2019). Furthermore, research on AI journalism in Africa and Nigeria is still relatively sparse and even more limited in Port Harcourt, where much of the crisis information needs demand local knowledge, speed, trust and sensitivity. This study consequently attempts to bridge the gap by exploring the perception, acceptance and assessment of AI tools by media actors in Port Harcourt for effective crisis communication.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Crisis communication in the modern day has been influenced by the rapid flow of information and misinformation, public's distrust and pressure for instant response during crisis situations. During public emergencies, political disagreements, environmental incidents, security threats and organizational crises, media stakeholders in Port Harcourt are expected

to ensure they give accurate updates. The same digital space that enables swift communication also can promote rumours, emotional framing, and unverified claims to be spread before official clarification. AI tools can enhance media monitoring, content creation, trend identification and fact-checking, but can also present risks such as algorithmic bias, misinformation, lack of transparency in sources, and overreliance on AI. Although there is existing literature which has contributed to the understanding of AI in journalism and crisis communication separately, the relationship between the use of AI and the effectiveness of crisis communication among the stakeholders of the media in Port Harcourt has not been adequately studied in the literature. This creates a gap in knowledge regarding what local media actors consider useful AI, challenges to its adoption, and if AI-backed communication will enhance or hinder accuracy, credibility, empathy and public trust in crises.

### 1.3 Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine artificial intelligence adoption and crisis communication effectiveness among media stakeholders in Port Harcourt.

### 1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the level and forms of artificial intelligence adoption among media stakeholders in Port Harcourt.
2. To assess how AI adoption contributes to timeliness, accuracy, monitoring and message coordination in crisis communication.
3. To identify the perceived risks and barriers associated with AI use in crisis communication among media stakeholders.
4. To determine strategies for improving responsible AI adoption for effective crisis communication in Port Harcourt.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Concept of Artificial Intelligence Adoption

The adoption of artificial intelligence involves the acceptance, integration, and normalisation of AI-based tools and technologies into people and organisational work practices. According to Broussard et al. (2019), AI is a collection of "computational systems" that can help with aspects of journalistic tasks including classification, prediction, discovery and automation. Lewis et al. (2019) have also pointed out that when AI is adopted, the relationship between human and machines is altered as the machines are now active in the communication process. Guzman and Lewis (2020) maintained that AI should be considered as communication infrastructure as it influences the ways in which messages are created, circulated, and interpreted. Diakopoulos (2020) described AI-supported news discovery as the process of computational systems being used to identify potential news leads and to guide the editorial process. De-Lima-Santos and Ceron (2022) considered the use of AI in news media as a comprehensive shift, encompassing four main areas of machine learning, natural language processing, automation, and audience analytics. Gutierrez Lopez et al. (2023) emphasized that a successful adoption of AI is facilitated when the tool aligns with newsroom values and routines. Cools and Diakopoulos (2024) demonstrate its use in brainstorming, summarizing, translation and support in production, and Cools and Koliska (2024) associated its use with transparency and accountability. For this study, adopting AI includes the responsible use of

AI tools to monitor crises, create messages and verify content, and engage audiences, all within the scope of human editorial control.

### 2.2 Crisis Communication Effectiveness

Crisis communication effectiveness concerns the capacity of communication to reduce uncertainty, protect trust and guide public understanding during disruptive events. Jin et al. (2014) explain that crisis communication is effective when publics receive appropriate information through credible sources and suitable formats. Eriksson (2018) identifies social media crisis communication effectiveness with speed, listening, interaction, channel choice and strategy fit. Du Plessis (2018) emphasizes dialogic content, renewal-oriented messaging and stakeholder engagement as markers of effective response. Cheng (2019) argues that crisis communication in social media environments depends on dialogue between organizations and publics. Coombs (2007) connects effectiveness with matching crisis response strategies to crisis responsibility and reputational threat. Chon and Kim (2022) show that social media analytics can help crisis managers understand public attribution and emotions during major crises. Zhan (2025) demonstrates that AI-generated care-based messages may influence trust when crisis response strategies vary. Mallek et al. (2026) also link AI-powered chatbots with crisis communication efficiency, trust-building and message customization. In this study, crisis communication effectiveness means the ability of media stakeholders to use communication that is timely, accurate, credible, empathetic, locally relevant and capable of correcting misinformation during crises.

### 2.3 Theoretical Review

#### 2.3.1 Technology Acceptance Model

Relevance of the Technology Acceptance Model is that it provides understanding to why media stakeholders might embrace or reject AI tools. Davis (1989) states that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use affect technology acceptance. For AI adoption, perceived usefulness is defined as journalists, editors and communication officers' belief that AI will help them with monitoring, drafting, verification, translation, or audience analysis. Perceived ease of use is about the availability of such tools, their understandability, and their compatibility with current news room or communication processes. This reasoning is supported by recent journalism studies. Jamil (2021) concluded that journalists appreciate AI, but lack it when skills, resources and institutional support are less. De-Lima-Santos and Ceron (2022) demonstrate that organizational readiness and professional perceptions are factors that influence the adoption of news media. Gutierrez Lopez et al. (2023) add that AI tools are accepted when they blend with editorial values and human judgement. Cools and Diakopoulos (2024) demonstrate that when it comes to using generative AI, journalists use it selectively when its assistance is needed for tasks that are routine but not a replacement for professional responsibility.

#### 2.3.2 Situational Crisis Communication Theory

Situational Crisis Communication Theory which suggests that the effectiveness of crisis communication is related to the match between the crisis situation, message strategy, and the expectations of the stakeholders. Coombs (2007) states that the type of crisis, responsibility and reputational risk should be taken into account when making decisions on how to respond to crises. Jin et al. (2014) build upon this concern by demonstrating that the origin of the crisis,

the information form and source affect public reactions. The social-mediated approach to crisis communication also sheds light on the relationship between publics and influential social media users/organizations in the context of a crisis (Cheng, 2019). According to Eriksson (2018) listening, channel integration, public engagement and speed are key elements to successful social media crisis communication. Du Plessis (2018) further suggests that dialogic content is helpful for renewal and repairing relationships. Social media analytics is shown by Chon and Kim (2022) to be effective in enhancing crisis assessment by detecting emotions and attribution patterns. AI can also assist with message personalisation and trust-building, but AI-generated crisis communication does need human judgment, disclosure and ethical oversight, as highlighted by Zhan (2025) and Mallek et al. (2026). These theories collaborate to explain that AI adoption can enhance crisis communication efforts only if media stakeholders rely on it as a tool to supplement rather than replace their professional duties.

### 2.3 Empirical Review

Thurman et al. (2017) studied automated journalism and determined that professionals believed that automation was useful in boosting speed, volume and specificity of routine news output. The study has relevance because there is a need for fast processing of large information flows when in a crisis. It also revealed that automation brings in the requirement of human judgment, curiosity, and verification.

Lewis et al. (2019) examined the field of automation and journalism and human-machine communication. The study revealed how AI transforms newsroom roles and the need to reimagine human-to-machine relationships in newswork. Its significance is that it demonstrates that the use of AI in crisis communication is not just a technological shift, but a transformation of authority, accountability and professional identity.

Diakopoulos (2020) carried out a qualitative study of computational news discovery, and concluded that journalists require tools that help them with editorial orientation without compromising news judgment. This is of relevance to the present study as AI can aid in detection of the signals of crises by the media stakeholders in Port Harcourt but the human assessment will remain necessary before the publication or broadcasting of the information.

Jamil (2021) examined the use of AI in the practice of journalism among Pakistani journalists and identified some opportunities and challenges. AI was seen as a tool for efficiency for journalists, but it also posed challenges like a lack of training, resources, and a need for understanding how humans and AI work together.

De-Lima-Santos and Ceron (2022) conducted a literature review on the current perception of AI in news media and identified that AI is used for news gathering, production, distribution and business. They also mentioned ethics, data quality and sustainability issues.

Gutierrez Lopez et al. (2023) explored the role of AI tools in the newsroom workflow of two newsrooms in London. They found that sociotechnical design and professional values and collaboration between journalists and technologists were crucial for acceptance.

Cools and Diakopoulos (2024) analysed journalists' use of generative AI, and found that they were using it in various ways, such as generating ideas, summarising content, assisting with translation and production tasks. They also raised issues on accuracy, transparency and editorial dependence. The results of this study are directly applicable to this study as it concerns the need for speed in crisis communication with the need for caution with regard to automation.

In a systematic review of social media crisis communication, Eriksson (2018) highlighted lessons learnt for practice, such as the importance of listening, selecting the right channels and interaction and the importance of the fit between interaction and social media strategy. The study reinforces the notion that AI can augment crisis communication by increasing listening and monitoring, but not the engagement of relationships.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Chon and Kim (2022) used social media analytics to examine governments' crisis management strategies and showed that big data collected from social media can be utilized to uncover public emotions and attributions. This proof is valuable for the use of AI-powered analytics in crises, particularly when there is rapid public response.

To assess if AI-generated care-based crisis messages boost public confidence in the government, Zhan (2025) investigated the impact of such messaging. The study is significant as it brings AI research closer to the goals of crisis communications. It proposes that AI generated messages can impact the trustworthiness of the message, which will vary depending on the response strategy, source perception and the human nature of the message.

## 3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative interpretive research design. This design was suitable considering the study aimed to explore the meanings, experiences and professional judgements of media stakeholders, not just numerical measures of AI adoption. The interpretative approach enabled the researcher to explore what stakeholders mean by the term ‘AI’; what they use and don't use AI tools for; how they link AI tools to timeliness, accuracy, credibility and trust in crisis communication; and how they relate to AI tools when communicating during a crisis. When rich explanations about professional routines, ethical issues, and contextual constraints are needed, qualitative inquiry is appropriate (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Nowell et al., 2017). The population comprised journalists, editors, broadcasters, digital content managers, public relations practitioners, media educators and communication officers in public and private organizations in Port Harcourt. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who had direct experience in news production, public communication, crisis reporting, digital media management or AI-supported communication work. A sample of 24 was determined as sufficient to yield meaningful qualitative information, and there was enough diversity in professional categories. The data were obtained by using semi-structured interviews and questions related to the awareness of AI, current usage of AI, crisis communication practice, perceived advantages, disadvantages and ethical precautions. The data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis including familiarization, coding, theme development, review, definition and interpretation. Careful recording of interview notes, comparison of themes across groups of participants, explicit

focus on conflicting viewpoints and reference to previous literature to aid interpretation and ensure trustworthiness.

## 4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Level and Forms of Artificial Intelligence Adoption among Media Stakeholders

The study found that AI use among media stakeholders in Port Harcourt is on the rise but remain uneven, the study finding said. The participants implied that using AI tools to help them with transcription, headline suggestions, grammar corrections, translation, monitoring social media, searching for images, summarizing content, and doing quick background research. But in many newsrooms or communication units, the process of adopting has not yet been institutionalized. This discovery is in line with Guanah et al. (2020) who reported that Nigerian journalists knew the importance of AI but lived with mostly manual processes. It also echoes Jamil (2021), who found that journalists in the Global South have a positive attitude towards AI, but limited resources and training opportunities.

### 4.2 Contributes of AI adoption to timeliness, accuracy, monitoring and message coordination in crisis communication

The study found that AI can enhance the efficiency and awareness of crisis communication if applied responsibly. AI-powered monitoring aids in recognizing social media trends, public complaints, misinformation, keywords and emotional sentiment. It can assist communicators in identifying problems faster and responding quicker during a crisis. This aligns with the findings of Chon and Kim (2022) that social media analytics can assist crisis managers in comprehending the public emotion and attributions during serious crisis situations. It also conforms with the position of Diakopoulos (2020), who suggested that computational discovery can guide editorial focus, particularly if the volume of information is too great to handle manually.

**Perceived Risks and Barriers Associated with AI Use in Crisis Communication**

Further findings revealed that the effectiveness of communication cannot be ensured by AI. Stakeholders reiterated that verification, empathy, local language sensitivity, source credibility and editorial responsibility are still needed in crisis communication. While AI-generated drafts can be helpful, it is important to review them against official sources and local realities before they are shared. This is a finding that corroborates Eriksson (2018), who stated that listening was one of the key elements in social media crisis communication, along with strategic response and channel appropriateness. It also aligns with the findings of Cools and Diakopoulos (2024), who discovered that journalists view generative AI as useful for routine support tasks but are skeptical about accuracy and transparency.

More importantly, finding revealed that ethical and operational challenges impede responsible AI adoption. The participants highlighted the following challenges in the use of AI for Crisis Communication: Weak internet connectivity, Irregular power supply, Subscription cost, Limited AI literacy, Lack of newsroom policy, Fear of job displacement, Poor data quality, Plagiarism risk, Deep fake threats, and Uncertainty about disclosure. The same concerns have been identified by De-Lima-Santos and Ceron (2022) who associated AI adoption with ethical and organisational readiness. They also underscore the significance of

algorithmic transparency, as emphasized by Cools and Koliska (2024), who argued that it plays a crucial role in maintaining trust in AI-driven news creation.

**Strategies for Improving Responsible AI Adoption for Effective Crisis Communication**

In addition, finding revealed that a human-AI hybrid model is preferred for crisis communication. Participants appreciated AI as a listening tool, a sorting tool, a drafting and analysis tool, and preferred to still have a human to verify, frame, publish, approve for spokesperson, and engage the public. The finding is particularly relevant for Gutierrez Lopez et al. (2023) who proposed that there is a need to integrate AI tools into the journalistic value system and routines. It additionally helps Zhan (2025), who found in his study that AI-generated crisis messages can impact trust, but this impact should be considered within the context of source perception and response strategy. In Port Harcourt, where crisis messages often involve sensitive community, environmental and political issues, human oversight remains necessary for context, tone and accountability.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusion

The study finds that there is meaningful potential for the effective use of artificial intelligence in crisis communication among the media stakeholders in the city of Port Harcourt. AI can aid in speeding up the monitoring process, drafting messages, trend analysis, translation, summarizing and identifying misinformation. These functions are crucial in settings where the media stakeholders must take action towards the political, environmental, public health, industrial and security crises. But the benefits of AI are contingent on responsible use. The results demonstrate that AI is best used in a communication process that is human-led, and places importance on accuracy, empathy, verification, transparency and local understanding. The study also finds that challenges like poor infrastructure, a lack of training, policy, ethical ambiguity, and weak institutional investment may diminish the advantages of AI. Technical readiness and professional accountability are thus required to ensure responsible AI adoption.

### 5.2 Recommendations

1. Media organisations in Port Harcourt should create written policies on the use of AI which include acceptable tools, verification mechanisms, disclosure guidelines and approval protocols for crisis communication.
2. Newsrooms, public relations and communication offices need to educate their teams on AI literacy, prompt writing, fact-checking, data verification, misinformation detection, and ethical practices with generative AI.
3. Media stakeholders should use AI mainly for monitoring, sorting, transcription, translation and draft support, while final crisis messages should remain under human editorial or spokesperson approval.
4. Professional bodies such as the Nigerian Union of Journalists and media training institutions should organize local workshops on AI-supported crisis reporting and responsible digital communication.

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