

The Crisis Management in Corporate Landscape Based on Multisector in Malaysia: A Cross-Sectorial Review

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Abstract

The critical role of effective management during crises has been underscored by the unprecedented challenges posed by the global COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly disrupted corporate operations worldwide. In Malaysia, the pandemic induced substantial financial and operational losses across various industries. In Malaysia, companies under the categories of Government-Linked Companies (GLCs) exhibited more robust crisis management frameworks compared to private sector firms. This paper presents a comprehensive review of the literature on crisis management, focusing on its application within Malaysian companies during periods of crisis and adversity. Additionally, it investigates crisis management practices across diverse sectors to identify key determinants of crisis management effectiveness. In other words, this paper focuses on the multi-sectors of the different companies in Malaysia under the scope of crisis management. The reviews suggest that conventional business models and strategies that historically ensured corporate success are increasingly insufficient under crisis conditions, necessitating adaptive and proactive management approaches to sustain organizational viability during and post-crisis.

Keywords: Crisis Management, Malaysian Companies, Sector

INTRODUCTION

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Crisis is associated with unforeseen problems, and crises that occur in the context of an organisation are referred to as major, sudden, and act as a threat that can cause any company to collapse and and this was supported by Ciekanowski et al.(2023), crisis can destroy the company's goal, affecting the relationship between the stakeholders in the organisation and placing the company in a vulnerable position. Crisis management should be a continuous process within a corporation to prevent possible crises. Extreme crises can undermine a company's sustainability and stability (Vasickova, 2019). Companies today prioritise excellent crisis management to prepare for volatility and adapt to new working conditions (Khaddam, 2014).

The sudden pandemic that happened in the last few years has made companies realise that the future is uncertain. The adaption for the ‘new norm’ required the company to improve crisis management. Moreover, the crisis not only caused

companies to have awareness on establishing effective crisis management on managing the unexpected obstacles, yet it also gave companies the chance to modify the business market through the changes on the company and collaboration (Pedersen & Ritter, 2022). According to Sato's (2020) study, crisis management is seen as a process that a company uses to manage situations that could be harmful to its business, such as threats to stakeholders, the company, and the community at large. The management's goal is to prevent, assess, and be resilient and survive, and crisis management involves four processes: avoidance, preparedness, response, and recovery, as well as assessment.

There are models when it comes to crisis management. For example, the crisis management model derived from Pearson and Mitroff (1993), it consists of four stages which are detection, occurrence, recovery and resolution. In addition, according to Coombs (2021), one of the crisis management models has three stages and each stage consists of substages. For example, in the pre-crisis stage (1) it involves the detection, preparation and prevention of the crisis while in the crisis stage (2) contain of crisis recognition and crisis containment and lastly are the post-crisis (3) that compress of evaluation of the crisis been managed and preparing for the potential crises in the future. In crisis management, it is important to notice the involvement of risk management as improper management of risk will lead to the occurrence of crisis (Wut et al., 2021). Since risk is linked to events that could occur, whereas crisis management is expanded to a broader context, including managing the unexpected event before, during, and after, it is imperative to have an accurate understanding of risk when it comes to crisis management, including the distinctions between these two mechanisms. Therefore, crisis management serves as an opportunity to call for the company's protection in an undesirable scenario in an attempt to mitigate the rate of devastation following the crisis.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND ITS EVOLUTION

Crisis management did not begin with the rise in academic studies or formal adoption of its practices. Instead, the discipline has evolved from historical events and human responses to crises throughout time. According to Zamoum and Gorpe (2018), crises have shaped societies for centuries, and the ways in which societies responded to these crises laid the groundwork for modern crisis management practices. Historically, crises were already influencing societal outcomes. For instance, the Peloponnesian War. This illustrates how crises have been a part of human history and that their presence is

not a modern phenomenon. As Oommen (2005) explains, crises do not arise spontaneously, they have roots and context, which are often better understood through historical lenses. This underpins the idea that the evolution of crisis management is deeply tied to humanity's response to recurring disruptions. In terms of institutionalization of crisis management, the first book on crisis management was published in 1986. In 1987, Paul Shrivastava launched a special issue on crisis management in an academic journal, linking the topic directly to organizational collapse. Despite these developments, the adoption of crisis management terminology and practices varied globally. According to the study by Aini et al (2001), crisis management in Malaysia was evolved through the emergency management. Where emergency circumstances that can caused death, property damages and many more. Due to the inept handling of the forest and peat fires, the National Security Council Directive 20 which act as the policy statement for disaster relief operations was revoked in 1998 which caused the top government officials to attend the courses on crisis management conducted by the National Institute of Public Administration.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN MALAYSIAN COMPANIES

This section provides a comprehensive review of crisis management, encompassing both general theoretical perspectives and its specific application within corporate settings. The review is further extended to examine the practical implementation of crisis management strategies among Malaysian companies across various sectors, highlighting sectoral differences and challenges faced in adapting crisis response frameworks. Crisis management is a relatively novel concept within the corporate landscape of Malaysia, however, its relevance and demand have significantly increased in recent years (Othman & Yusoff, 2020). The nationwide lockdown imposed by the Malaysian government during the COVID-19 pandemic had affecting the performance of businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Omar et al., 2020). The urgency to develop effective crisis response mechanisms became apparent only after the onset of the pandemic, prompting organizations to take proactive steps aimed at survival and resilience in the face of severe disruptions. Despite growing recognition of its importance, the implementation of proactive crisis management programs in Malaysia remains limited and requires substantial improvement particularly in sectors such as the hotel industry. As previous studies suggest, the advancement of crisis management practices can yield favorable outcomes

for stakeholders and foster an organizational culture that supports effective crisis preparedness and response (Abo-Murad et al., 2019).

According to a survey conducted by Ipsos, the top five Malaysian companies perceived to have the most effective crisis management capabilities include Petronas, which ranks first, followed by Maybank, the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), and Perodua. The survey underscores the significance of trustworthy communication in crisis contexts and reveals that perceptions of crisis management effectiveness are not sector dependent. Furthermore, the survey indicates that while 70% of companies in Malaysia claim to possess a Crisis Management Plan (CMP), only 62% report having implemented it effectively. Alarmingly, 21% of companies disclosed the complete absence of any contingency plan, and only 17% were found to have fully functional and effective CMPs. Meanwhile, 70% of the organizations acknowledged the need to improve their crisis management frameworks, and 13% admitted their existing plans were inadequate (The Star, 2020). In addition, the response strategies adopted by Malaysian corporate practitioners often reflect a lack of preparedness and strategic foresight. For instance, many companies tend to delay public communication and postpone necessary actions during a crisis, contributing to the proliferation of misinformation and rumours post-crisis (Ahmad & Idid, 2020). This highlights the critical need for capacity building and the institutionalization of timely and transparent crisis communication protocols in Malaysian corporate governance.

Challenges Faced by the Malaysian Companies During Unexpected Events

The most memorable hardship faced by the companies is during COVID-19 pandemic. Where this event had exposed multiple vulnerabilities in Malaysia's business ecosystem, from operational shutdowns and financial instability to marketing inefficiencies, employment cuts, and supply chain challenges. These issues highlight the urgent need for adaptive crisis management strategies and digital transformation across sectors. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic at the end of 2019 marked the onset of a global health crisis. In Malaysia, the enforcement of the Movement Control Order (MCO) became a major impediment to business operations, regardless of company size. Business owners experienced substantial financial losses, a decline in sales, and disruptions in service delivery (Adam et al., 2021). The construction sector, for instance, was significantly affected by the pandemic-induced restrictions. According to Esa et al. (2020), the MCO resulted in project delays and delivery postponements, which are

critical issues in construction management. Firms were also forced to navigate increased operational costs and limited access to necessary resources, further complicating project execution (Kee et al., 2021).

Another major challenge faced by businesses was the inability to sustain cash flow during prolonged periods of inactivity. Financial liquidity is essential for maintaining payroll, servicing loans, and meeting other operational expenses. Companies with insufficient cash reserves were especially vulnerable and faced the risk of insolvency (Adam et al., 2021). Marketing strategies also proved inadequate under pandemic conditions. Many SMEs in Malaysia continued to rely on traditional marketing tools such as flyers, magazine advertisements, billboards, and radio commercials which became ineffective under movement restrictions. These methods failed to attract new customers or retain existing ones, further exacerbating revenue losses (Ambad et al., 2020). The reduction in consumer demand, coupled with mandatory lockdowns, forced many businesses to scale down or cease operations altogether, placing employees at risk. The resulting employment challenges were significant, as firms resorted to cost-cutting measures such as reduced working hours, unpaid leave, and salary reductions to survive (Asian Development Bank & International Labour Organization, 2020; Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021). These strategies, though necessary, negatively impacted employee morale and organizational performance.

Furthermore, even businesses operating online, such as those in the e-commerce sector, encountered significant disruptions. Most e-commerce firms in Malaysia are heavily dependent on imports from China. The global supply chain disruptions triggered by the pandemic led to delivery delays and inventory shortages. In addition, shifting consumer behavior amid the crisis contributed to a volatile and weakened business environment (Hasanat et al., 2020). Besides from the pandemic crisis, there are other crisis that act as challenges for the companies in Malaysia such as the geopolitical and tariff wars that happen in 2025. For instance, based on the study by the Hoque et al. (2021), geopolitical uncertainties act as threat towards the financial market as well the global economies where the outcomes from their studies show that geopolitical give a negative effect upon the Islamic stock return in Malaysia and the tariff war that occurred in 2025 due to the action of the United State's president, Donald Trump that increase the import tariff on Malaysia up to 25%, had caused Malaysia to suffered fatal results such as decline in exports and decreasing level of corporate earning (Zainuddin, 2025). This

circumstance had given a clear sign that having effective crisis management able to protect the company from harmful consequences from this crisis.

In summary, the crisis that contain in every hardship event had the capacity to exposed significant vulnerabilities in crisis preparedness and management across Malaysian industries. From disrupted supply chains and marketing inefficiencies to workforce reductions and financial strain, businesses were compelled to adapt rapidly in order to survive. These challenges underscore the urgent need for more resilient and adaptable crisis management strategies in both the public and private sectors.

Challenges Faced by the Malaysian Companies – A Sectorial Review

It is important to recognize that management practices vary across companies due to differences in their unique characteristics (Schmillen, 2020). This variation extends to sectoral contexts, where each industry may adopt distinct approaches to management, including crisis management. The diverse nature of businesses necessitates tailored crisis management strategies, as the way crises are handled can differ significantly between companies, particularly those that are top-rated or operate at a larger scale. Based on the study by Widianoro and Shahadan (2024), the requirement for effective crisis management is crucial for varies sectors in order to be prepared when meddling with unexpected event. This shows that, it is essential to acknowledge that effective crisis management is not exclusive to any particular sector rather, it is a critical requirement for all organizations regardless of industry (Ipsos, 2021). A study in Malaysia's event management industry highlights challenges in crisis management practices, resilience, and organizational learning during the health pandemic (Ghaderi et al., 2024). Meanwhile, the construction sector faces significant difficulties due to a lack of crisis management preparedness, resulting in severe negative impacts during the pandemic (Mukhtar, 2022). Accordance to the study by Ong and Lee (2024), manufacturing companies tend to implement persevering and innovation strategy to manage crisis and suggested that intervene in term of policy and improvement of government assistance can aid the manufacturing in managing crisis better. A study by Ghaderi et al. (2021) shown that the act of managers in the hospitality firm who refused to embedded resilience in the crisis preparation in the core belief and structure of the firm had caused the reluctant issue in the crisis management implementation in this sector.

In contrast, high-risk industries like oil and gas recognize the importance of crisis management, emphasizing internal communication to protect reputation and support strategic growth, while also heavily focusing on external stakeholders such as government agencies and media (Mohamad et al., 2022; Olsson, 2014). Government-linked companies (GLCs) and regulators typically have better-planned crisis management systems, driven by high public expectations and their central role in national crisis response (Lim, 2021). Despite this, both public and private sector companies continue to face challenges in sustaining operations post-crisis, with varying levels of preparedness and resilience measures implemented (Ipsos, 2021). Overall, these sectors exhibit diverse challenges that highlight the need for tailored crisis management strategies across Malaysia's industries. McKinsey (2020) surveyed and subsequently interviewed with business leaders and believed that, particularly in times of crisis more urgent actions to take include: (1) adapting the core to meet shifting customer needs; (2) identifying and quickly addressing new opportunity areas being created by the changing landscape; (3) reevaluating the innovation initiative portfolio and ensuring resources are allocated appropriately; and (4) building the foundation for postcrisis growth in order to remain competitive in the recovery period. Table 1 provides a summary of the challenges encountered by various sectors of companies in Malaysia.

Table 1:

Summary Table of the Challenges Encountered by Various Sectors of Companies in Malaysia

Sector/Industry	Crisis Management practice	Challenges Faced	References
Event Management	Limited resilience and crisis preparedness	Struggled with organizational learning and response during pandemic	Ghaderi et al. (2024)
Construction	Generally underprepared for crisis events	Project delays, resource shortages, and rising costs during pandemic	Mukhtar (2022)
Hospitality	Ignorance of crisis preparation	The reluctant act by the manager to adapt resilience for crisis preparation in the practice and structure	Ghaderi et al. (2021)
Manufacturing	Implementation of persevering and innovation strategy to manage crisis	Lack of policy intervention and government assistance in order to execute the strategy to combat crisis	Ong & Lee (2024)
Oil & Gas (High-Risk)	Structured and proactive crisis communication strategies	High stakeholder expectations and media scrutiny	Mohamad et al. (2022); Olsson (2014)

GLCs and Regulators	Generally well-developed crisis management systems due to public accountability	Pressure to maintain stability and coordinate national responses	Lim (2021)
SMEs and Private Firms	Varied and inconsistent, often lacking formal crisis planning	Inadequate preparedness, cash flow issues, ineffective traditional marketing during crises	Ipsos (2021); Ambad et al. (2020)
All Sectors	Sector-specific approaches due to unique business characteristics	Difficulty sustaining operations post-crisis, inconsistent levels of resilience and preparedness	Schmillen (2020); Ipsos (2021)

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a systematic literature review (SLR) as the core research methodology to explore crisis management practices and their applicability across organizational sectors which indicate the scope of this paper is the multisector of various types of companies in Malaysia. The SLR approach is appropriate for synthesizing a broad spectrum of knowledge, especially when evaluating theoretical frameworks and practical implementations in a diverse and evolving field such as crisis management. Table 2 below provide the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the journal:

Table 2:
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria Table

	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Language	English	Other languages
Time Period	2008-2025	Less than 2008
Study Focus	Crisis Management & sector	Non-related topic of crisis management & sector
Type of Journal	Peer-Reviewed Journal	Survey

The literature search was conducted online using well-established academic databases including Google Scholar, Scopus, Emerald Insight, and other scholarly repositories. These platforms were selected for their extensive collections of peer-reviewed articles and multidisciplinary relevance. The search was restricted to publications between 1993 and 2024 to capture both foundational theories and current trends in crisis management. In terms of the inclusion criteria, the materials reviewed include peer-reviewed journal articles, books and book chapters, doctoral dissertations and master's theses, conference papers and proceedings, official reports and policy documents and reputable websites and other scholarly sources. Sources were selected

based on relevance to the research objective, and their contribution to the theoretical and practical understanding of crisis management. The Table 3 below provide the information on the scope of journal with the years in order to meet the purpose of this study.

Table 3:

Table for the Scope of the Journal

Scope of the Journal	No.of Journal	Range of Year
Journal on Crisis Management	18	1998-2022
Journal on Crisis Management Accordance to Sector	11	2022-2024
Journal on Crisis	16	2009-2024

The collected literature was analysed thematically to identify recurring patterns, conceptual developments, sector-specific applications, and emerging challenges in crisis management. The objective was to evaluate how evidence-based insights can be translated into practical strategies that enhance organizational preparedness, responsiveness, and sustainability. The integration of literature from diverse academic and professional domains ensures a multidisciplinary perspective on crisis management. This approach increases access to consolidated knowledge, thereby supporting the development of managerial literacy that benefits not only scholars but also practitioners and policymakers. As noted by Pfeffer and Sutton (2006), leveraging evidence-based insights contributes significantly to the improvement of managerial decision-making and execution within organizations, ultimately reinforcing their capacity to withstand and recover from crises.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Organizations of all sizes are inherently vulnerable to unforeseen disruptions, and the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced this reality across industries. Notably, this vulnerability is not exclusive to small enterprises but is evident in large organizations as well, primarily due to a lack of structured and sustainable crisis response mechanisms. Many organizations demonstrated insufficient preparedness for the prolonged and multifaceted impacts of crises, thereby intensifying the negative consequences on their operations. This study emphasizes the importance of enhancing awareness and preparedness in crisis management. Developing robust crisis strategies is crucial to mitigating operational risks, ensuring business continuity, and avoiding long-term misfortunes. During the pandemic, firms globally experienced substantial setbacks,

reinforcing the critical need for adaptable and evidence-based crisis management practices. To navigate such unpredictable situations, various crisis management models have been applied across different contexts. For example, SMEs in the United States adopted the Burnett model, recognizing its relevance to dynamic operational environments (March & Tremblay, 2022). Similarly, Swedish SMEs implemented crisis management models emphasizing proactive preparation, organizational learning, and strategic planning (Fasth & Styhre, 2022). These frameworks underline the importance of tailored crisis responses that align with organizational capacity and contextual needs.

In the Malaysian context, adopting well-established models such as Mitroff's Five-Stage Model, Gonzalez-Herrero and Pratt's Three-Stage Model, and Fink's Four-Stage Model offers a pragmatic approach to crisis navigation. These models, rooted in theoretical rigor and practical relevance, provide comprehensive frameworks that support companies in managing crises before, during, and after their occurrence. However, while newer crisis management models have emerged in response to COVID-19, many still require empirical validation and refinement to bridge theoretical gaps.

A key insight emerging from this review is that conventional management approaches are insufficient in crisis scenarios characterized by rapid change and high uncertainty. Dwiedienawati et al. (2021) assert that effective crisis management requires a shift from reactive to proactive strategies. This includes not only the implementation of models but also the integration of cross-functional crisis teams within the organization. These teams must coordinate closely with executive leadership, establish responsive communication platforms, perform predictive analyses, and prepare ongoing risk assessments and mitigation reports (Ostaev et al., 2020). Moreover, fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptability is essential. Organizations must invest in upskilling leaders and employees in crisis-specific competencies to reinforce institutional resilience. The development of a robust crisis management framework should thus be viewed not merely as a defensive measure but as a strategic tool that supports organizational sustainability and long-term success. The effectiveness of crisis management serves as a vital managerial tool to ensure operational continuity and organizational resilience during periods of disruption. Identifying and leveraging internal factors that contribute to effective crisis management is essential, particularly in the context of diverse industry sectors in Malaysia. Although each sector operates within distinct environmental conditions, the overarching goal across all companies remains consistent: safeguarding long-term sustainability, preserving organizational reputation,

and achieving strategic objectives. Importantly, effective crisis management enhances internal organizational functioning, benefiting both public and private sector entities by promoting preparedness, coordination, and adaptive capacity.

In conclusion, the discussion reaffirms that effective crisis management is not sector-specific; rather, it is universally essential. The adoption and contextual adaptation of established crisis models can serve as a critical lever for organizational resilience, especially in regions like Malaysia where sectoral diversity requires differentiated strategies. Future studies should explore the applicability of these models across various sectors in Malaysia, while organizations or companies must continue to refine and institutionalize crisis practices in preparation for potential disruptions.

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