



Navigating Crisis in Digital Public Spaces : PT KAI's Communication Strategy on Instagram @keretaapikita After the East Bekasi Accident

¹Kurnia Puspita Dewi*, ²Iva Fikrani Deslia

^{1,2}Faculty of Literature, Culture, and Communication, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, 55198, Indonesia

¹2200030070@webmail.uad.ac.id; ²iva.deslia@comm.uad.ac.id

*Correspondent email author: 2200030070@webmail.uad.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Crisis communication is crucial for public transportation companies, especially when a crisis results in loss of life. This study analyzes PT Kereta Api Indonesia (PT KAI) crisis communication via its Instagram account @keretaapikita following the train accident in East Bekasi using Coombs' Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). This study contributes to the field of crisis communication by examining SCCT strategies in official Instagram content and the presence of several indicators within a single carousel post. Using a descriptive qualitative content analysis, this study examined 12 purposively selected Instagram posts published between April 28 and May 9, 2026, analyzed for their visual elements and captions following the Miles and Huberman model. The findings indicated that PT KAI's response was structured around accountability rather than defensiveness: Rebuild and Bolstering were the dominant response clusters, evidenced by the Compensation indicator appearing in all 12 posts and the Reminder indicator in 10 posts, while the Diminish indicator (Justification) appeared in only 3 posts and the Deny strategy did not appear at all. Several indicators frequently co-occurred within a single carousel post rather than standing alone, suggesting that the account combined factual explanation, compensation, and emotional solidarity as a deliberate, mutually reinforcing response rather than as isolated, ad hoc tactics. Taken together, PT KAI's crisis communication emphasized accountability rather than denial, providing a reference for public transportation companies seeking to develop more accountable social media crisis communication.

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1. Introduction

Current technological developments have transformed the patterns of communication between organizations and the general public, particularly through the use of social media as a means to disseminate information quickly and comprehensively, build relationships with audiences, and manage corporate reputation. During a crisis, social media plays a crucial role, as organizations use it as an official channel to provide updates on the crisis and to restore public trust (Indah & Goeritman, 2021). The rapid spread of information on social media requires organizations to respond quickly, accurately, and consistently to prevent the spread of misinformation and reputational damage (Chunxia et al., 2022).



According to the report Digital 2026: Indonesia by We Are Social & Meltwater, there are approximately 180 million social media users in Indonesia (Murphy, 2025; Social, 2025). One of the social media platforms widely used by companies is Instagram, as it offers the advantage of visual communication through photos, videos, infographics, and various other interactive features that can increase audience engagement (Kristanti & Buntaran, 2024). Data from NapoleonCat shows that as of January 2026, the number of Instagram users in Indonesia had reached 121 million (Cat, 2023; Suciati et al., 2024). The high number of Instagram users indicates that the platform has a significant influence on shaping public opinion regarding certain events, particularly when facing crisis situations (Husen, 2025).

PT Kereta Api Indonesia (PT KAI) is a State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) operating in the field of railway transportation services in Indonesia. As a public transportation provider, PT KAI is responsible for providing safe, comfortable, and on-time services to the public. To support its public services and information dissemination, PT KAI utilizes social media as one of its official channels for communicating with the public (Rajagukguk & Zulkarnain, 2022). One of the accounts used to convey information to the public is the Instagram account @keretaapikita, which has over 1 million followers. Through this official account, the company shares various types of information with the public, such as travel updates, customer service information, company programs, and updates regarding emergencies or operational disruptions. Corporate image and public trust are crucial for PT KAI, given the high number of rail service users as evidenced by PT KAI's own data, which indicates that the number of train passengers from January through March 2026 reached approximately 128 million. The large number of people using rail transportation services underscores that safety and public trust have become vital priorities for PT KAI.

Although PT KAI continues to strive to improve the quality of its services, the company remains vulnerable to various operational risks, including train accidents caused by technical factors, human error, or other external factors. One incident that garnered widespread public attention was the train accident in East Bekasi involving the Argo Bromo Anggrek train and the KRL Commuter Line, as it directly impacted passenger safety and the quality of public transportation services. The train accident, which occurred on April 28, 2026, in the vicinity of East Bekasi Station, involved the Argo Bromo Anggrek train and the KRL Commuter Line. The incident resulted in disruptions to train service, injuries, and fatalities, which drew widespread public concern.

The evacuation process lasted approximately eight hours and involved the National Search and Rescue Agency (Basarnas), the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI), the Indonesian National Police (Polri), and PT KAI personnel. A total of 240 passengers on the Argo Bromo Anggrek train were successfully evacuated unharmed, while assisting the KRL Commuter Line passengers took longer due to injuries and fatalities. Following the accident, PT KAI carried out operational recovery efforts, provided support to the victims and their families, and disseminated information to the public through various platforms, including the Instagram account @keretaapikita. Information regarding the incident then spread widely and rapidly through social media and mass media, giving rise to various public opinions about the company. Such a situation has the potential to escalate into a communication crisis that could damage the company's image if not handled appropriately. Therefore, crisis communication that is conducted appropriately, promptly, transparently, and responsibly is crucial for maintaining the company's reputation and public trust (Wirman et al., 2024).

Crisis communication is one of the strategies companies employ to manage the dissemination of information, provide explanations to the public, and demonstrate the organization's accountability in dealing with crisis situations (Wartono et al., 2024). In this study, PT KAI's crisis communication

was analyzed using the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) proposed by Coombs & Holladay (2002). This theory explains that organizations need to adapt their crisis response strategies based on the characteristics of the crisis they face in order to minimize the negative impact on the company's reputation. Through appropriate communication strategies, organizations can manage reputational risks and maintain relationship with stakeholders during a crisis. SCCT categorizes crises into several clusters and provides response strategies such as deny, diminish, rebuild, and bolstering to minimize damage to the organization's reputation (Widyanto et al., 2022).

Research on PT KAI's crisis communication has been conducted by several previous researchers. A study Nursabila et al. (2025) showed that passenger complaints expressed via social media tend to be emotional in nature, while PT KAI's responses were deemed to be rushed. Meanwhile, the study by Wianda et al. (2025) revealed that operational disruptions caused by flooding fall under the "victim crisis" cluster within the SCCT framework because they are caused by external factors beyond the organization's control. More recently, a study by Alfi & Alfa (2026) analyzed PT KAI's crisis communication strategy regarding the East Bekasi incident using the Social-Media Crisis Communication (SMCC) framework. Their research combined official Instagram posts from @kai121_, online media coverage, and public interactions on social media to examine the dynamics of communication and audience responses during the crisis.

Although examining the same incident, Alfi and Alfa's study focused on crisis communication dynamics and public responses through the SMCC framework, whereas this study focuses on the construction of crisis communication messages through the @keretaapikita account using the SCCT framework. This distinction offers a different analytical perspective by examining the application of SCCT response strategies in official Instagram content. Internationally, a comparable pattern has been documented by Kamboh et al. (2024), who examined how Pakistan Railways used information technology and social media for image repair following an organizational crisis. Their finding that a state-owned railway operator relied on corrective action and reduced offensiveness rather than denial parallels the accountability-oriented pattern this study finds for PT KAI, while also underscoring that crisis communication research on public transportation operators in developing countries remains limited, reinforcing the relevance of the present study.

Based on the above, the research question for this study is: How did PT KAI construct its crisis communication through the @keretaapikita Instagram account based on the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) following the train accident in East Bekasi? Based on this research question, this study aims to analyze how PT KAI constructed its crisis communication through the @keretaapikita Instagram account based on the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) following the train accident in East Bekasi. This analysis focuses on official information, apologies, victim assistance, operational recovery, and the forms of crisis communication conveyed through the analyzed posts. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of digital crisis communication studies, particularly in the context of the public transportation sector. In addition, this study is also expected to serve as a practical reference for companies in utilizing social media as a crisis communication tool to safeguard their corporate image and maintain public trust when facing crisis situations.

2. Theoretical Framework

Crisis Communication

Crisis communication is the process by which an organization conveys information before, during, and after a crisis in an effort to mitigate negative impacts and maintain stakeholder trust (Widyastuti et al., 2024). According to Fearn-Banks, crisis communication is the dialogue between

a company and the public both before and after a crisis. Meanwhile, according to [Horsley \(2010\)](#), crisis communication can be understood as the process of collecting, processing, and disseminating the information needed to manage a crisis situation. This indicates that crisis communication is not only about conveying information to the public but also involves efforts to obtain accurate information, manage it systematically, and convey it appropriately to stakeholders ([Musdalifah et al., 2023](#)). Through this process, organizations can ensure that the information received by the public is consistent and reflects the actual situation, thereby preventing the spread of misinformation and protecting the organization's reputation while facing a crisis ([Rofiki Rahman & Astriani, 2023](#)).

In a crisis situation, organizations are required to respond quickly while remaining consistent and accountable in the information they share with the public, as this can influence public perception of the organization ([Yuanita, 2021](#)). Crisis communication also serves not only as a means of conveying information but also as an effort by the organization to demonstrate care, responsibility, and commitment in handling a crisis. Therefore, selecting the right communication strategy is a key factor in maintaining relationships with stakeholders and rebuilding public trust in the organization ([Zulham et al., 2024](#)).

Advances in information technology have shifted crisis communication practices from conventional methods toward digital communication that leverages social media. Through social media, organizations can convey information directly, reach a wide audience, and establish two-way communication with the public. However, the speed at which information spreads on social media also requires organizations to provide swift, accurate, and consistent responses to prevent the spread of misinformation. Therefore, social media has become a crucial channel in crisis communication, particularly for companies ([Maulvi et al., 2023](#)).

For transportation companies, crisis communication via social media is particularly critical as it relates to safety, security, and public trust in their services ([Babatunde, 2022](#)). Information such as crisis management, operational conditions, and recovery measures also needs to be communicated transparently to mitigate negative public impact and to demonstrate the company's accountability. In this context, social media serves not only as a medium for information but also as a tool for fostering dialogue, demonstrating accountability, and managing organizational reputation during a crisis ([Firdausi et al., 2025](#)). In this study, crisis communication was analyzed through posts on PT Kereta Api Indonesia's official Instagram account, @keretaapikita, which was used as a medium for conveying information during the crisis response to a train accident. The posted content was analyzed using the SCCT to identify the crisis communication strategies employed by PT KAI in responding to the crisis.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), formulated by [Coombs & Holladay \(2002\)](#), is one of the theories frequently used to analyze organizational communication strategies when facing a crisis. This theory posits that the success of an organization's response is largely determined by the extent to which the public attributes responsibility for the cause of the crisis ([Coombs & Holladay, 2002](#)). Thus, SCCT helps organizations establish appropriate communication strategies by considering the characteristics of the crisis at hand and public perceptions of the organization's responsibility for it ([Rahmawati et al., 2024](#)). Within the SCCT framework, three situational variables influence an organization's response mechanism to a crisis and provide the basis for selecting appropriate communication strategies: Crisis responsibility attribution, crisis history, and prior relational reputation. The crisis responsibility attribution refers to the extent to which the public views the organization as responsible for the crisis.

Crisis history relates to whether the organization has experienced a similar crisis in the past. Prior relational reputation refers to the public's assessment of the organization before the current crisis occurred. These variables are important because they influence the perceived reputational threats faced by stakeholders and serve as the basis for selecting the appropriate response strategy. Therefore, this study employs the SCCT not only to identify denial, diminish, rebuilding, and bolstering strategies, but also because the theory links crisis situations to organizational responsibility and responses in reputation management.

Public perception regarding which party should be held responsible for the crisis can be analyzed by categorizing crises into three clusters: 1) Victim cluster the public will view the organization as not being the cause of the crisis, and thus its position will be regarded as that of a victim. 2) Accidental cluster: The public will assess that the crisis did not result from the organization's intentional actions or was caused by events beyond the organization's control. 3) Preventable cluster: The public believes the crisis occurred due to the organization's actions, so the organization is considered the party responsible (Virginia et al., 2025). (Coombs & Holladay, 2002) findings indicate that public perceptions or assessments of responsibility are very low for the victim cluster, low for the accidental cluster, and high for the intentional cluster (Ghea Aurelia Ardy Ugahari & Riski Apriliani, 2025). These crisis categories determine the level of responsibility placed on the organization, which in turn influences the selection of an appropriate crisis management strategy. The lower the perceived level of responsibility, the more limited the need for accommodative strategies, whereas a higher level of responsibility requires strategies that emphasize corrective actions and relationship restoration.

Additionally, Coombs categorizes crisis response strategies into four main categories deny, diminish, rebuild, and bolstering which organizations use to respond to a crisis based on the level of responsibility the public perceives them to bear. Implementing the appropriate strategy can help minimize the crisis's impact on the organization's reputation (Hidayati & Purworini, 2025). The following is an explanation of these four categories: 1) Deny Strategy: This strategy is used by an organization when it is attempting to deny its involvement in a crisis or to refute that the event can be categorized as a serious crisis.

This strategy can take the form of attacking the accuser where an organization attacks the party making the accusation denial rejecting the existence of the crisis or the organization's involvement in the event and scapegoat shifting blame onto an individual or another party outside the organization (Makdin et al., 2023). 2) The Diminish Strategy: This strategy is used when an organization acknowledges the existence of a crisis but attempts to minimize public perception of the organization's level of responsibility for the event. In this strategy, the organization employs excuses attempting to convince the public that the crisis occurred beyond its control or was not entirely caused by the organization's actions and "justification" emphasizing that the crisis's impact is not as significant as the public perceives it to be (Nisa et al., 2026). 3) The Rebuild Strategy focuses on efforts to repair the organization's relationship with the public and restore its reputation, which has been damaged by the crisis. This strategy can be implemented through concrete actions such as compensation providing restitution to those who have suffered losses and an apology publicly expressing regret to the public or affected victims (Muadz et al., 2025). 4) The Bolstering Strategy is implemented through several methods, such as reminder reminding the public of the organization's past contributions or achievements; ingratiation expressing appreciation to stakeholders for their support; and victimage portraying the organization as a victim of the crisis itself (Tian & Yang, 2022).

3. Method

This study is grounded in the constructivist paradigm, employing a descriptive qualitative approach and content analysis as its analytical tool. The constructivist paradigm was chosen because this study seeks to understand and interpret the meaning of crisis communication constructed by PT Kereta Api Indonesia (PT KAI) through posts on its Instagram account. A descriptive qualitative approach was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the crisis communication strategies employed by the company in responding to train accidents, as well as its efforts to manage communication and relations with the public during the crisis.

The object of this study is the crisis communication content published through PT KAI's official Instagram account @keretaapikita, which is used as a channel for communicating with the public. This study focused on posts related to train accidents and published during the crisis management period. The content elements analyzed in this study included captions, photos, infographics, and official information conveyed by the company to the public. The posts analyzed comprised 12 entries published between April 28 and May 9, 2026.

The unit of analysis in this study is a single Instagram post in its entirety, consisting of all the visual elements it contains along with the accompanying caption. Although each Instagram post is defined as a single unit of analysis, a single post may contain more than one SCCT indicator, as some @keretaapikita posts use a carousel format that presents different messages on each slide. Therefore, a single post may be categorized under multiple indicators if it meets different operational definitions. These elements were analyzed as a single unit of crisis communication, since the caption and visuals generally complement each other in conveying PT KAI's communication strategy in each post.

The inclusion criteria for this study encompassed posts that explicitly discussed the train accident in East Bekasi, including information regarding the condition of the victims, compensation, apologies, the resumption of operations, and other forms of crisis communication. Meanwhile, the @keretaapikita account also regularly publishes non-crisis content, such as the launch of new trains, station history, inclusive transportation programs, and light entertainment content. These posts, which are unrelated to the accidents that are the focus of this study, were excluded from the analysis. Based on these criteria, 12 posts published between April 28 and May 9, 2026, were identified that specifically addressed the accident and PT KAI's crisis response.

Data selection was conducted using a purposive sampling method based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria described above. The selected posts contained information regarding the accident, victim care, expressions of condolences, support for the victims' families, the resumption of train operations, and other forms of communication that demonstrated PT KAI's response to the crisis. Data collection in this study was conducted through documentation and literature review. The documentation involved archiving screenshots of Instagram posts from @keretaapikita containing crisis communication messages following the train accident ([Widyastuti et al., 2024](#)). The collected data included photos, captions, and other supporting information relevant to the study's objectives. Additionally, a literature review was conducted by referencing scientific journals, academic articles, and previous studies discussing crisis communication, social media, crisis response, and Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT).

The primary data in this study consisted of content from the @keretaapikita Instagram account, including captions, photos, and infographics from 12 posts related to accidents. Secondary data, obtained through a literature review, consists of scientific journals, articles, and previous studies discussing crisis communication, social media, and the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), which were used to strengthen the analytical framework and interpretation of the findings.

The coding process in this study was conducted independently by the researcher. To ensure consistency in interpretation, the coding process was carried out in stages by reviewing each SCCT category and its operational definition before the data were finalized. Each post was analyzed based on its caption and the visual elements it contained, then categorized according to the relevant SCCT indicators. Since the coding process involved only one researcher, this study did not account for inter-coder differences in coding results. Consistency in interpretation was maintained by verifying the alignment between the classification results and the operational definitions for each SCCT indicator before finalizing the results. Nevertheless, the researcher acknowledges that the independent coding process has the potential to introduce subjectivity into the interpretation process. Therefore, this condition is recognized as one of the limitations of this study.

The analysis process involved examining the content of messages conveyed by the company through text and visuals in each Instagram post by @keretaapikita to identify the communication strategies used in addressing the crisis. The analysis was conducted by examining each Instagram post as a whole including captions, photos, infographics, and other visual elements and categorizing the content based on the SCCT indicators: deny, diminish, rebuild, and bolstering (Che et al., 2022). The data analysis technique in this study employed a qualitative content analysis method, with the data analysis process following the Miles & Huberman model, which includes the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024). During the data reduction stage, data relevant to the research focus were selected and classified based on the SCCT strategy categories. The data presentation stage involved tabulation and descriptive analysis to facilitate the interpretation of the findings. Meanwhile, the conclusion-drawing stage involved interpreting the analysis findings to analyze the crisis communication patterns implemented by PT KAI following the accident.

4. Result and Discussion

Based on the crisis classification in Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), the collision between the Argo Bromo Anggrek train and the KRL Commuter Line train that occurred in East Bekasi can be categorized as an “accidental cluster.” In this category of accidental cluster, the organization is viewed as having a low level of responsibility because the crisis did not result from any intentional act by the organization but rather was part of the operational risks inherent in providing transportation services. Nevertheless, the public still expects the organization to demonstrate concern, responsibility, and concrete actions in addressing the impacts of the crisis. This study focuses on analyzing the crisis communication patterns employed by PT KAI through its official @keretaapikita account using the SCCT approach. The analysis was conducted on 12 posts uploaded by PT KAI’s official Instagram account, @keretaapikita.

The analysis of 12 Instagram posts published by @keretaapikita during the handling of the East Bekasi accident crisis identified the use of three SCCT response strategies: Diminish, Rebuild, and Bolstering. The Rebuild and Bolstering strategies appeared most prominently across the analyzed content, while the Diminish strategy was identified only through the Justification indicator. In contrast, none of the indicators under the Deny strategy were identified in the analyzed posts. The findings show that PT KAI’s crisis communication primarily emphasized accountability and support for those affected, reflected in messages of apology and compensation, while also reinforcing public trust through commitments to safety, appreciation of stakeholders, and positive organizational values. The detailed findings for each SCCT strategy, including the identified indicators, operational definitions, and corresponding data units, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of the analysis of 12 pieces of content

SCCT Strategy	Indicators	Operational Definition	Findings	Data Units
Deny	Attack the accuser	Messages used by an organization to refute or counter parties that accuse the organization of being the cause of a crisis or of being unable to handle it.	No posts were found indicating that PT KAI had attempted to attack or refute those who voiced criticism and allegations.	Not Found
Deny	Denial	A message intended to deny the existence of a crisis, the organization's involvement, or the organization's responsibility for the events that occurred	There were no statements denying that the accident had occurred or that PT KAI had been involved in the crisis management process.	Not Found
Deny	Scapegoat	A message that attributes the cause of a crisis to individuals, organizations, or other parties outside the organization in order to minimize the organization's responsibility.	No posts were found that shifted the blame to staff members, third parties, or other external parties.	Not Found
Diminish	Excuse	A message used to downplay public perceptions of an organization's responsibility by stating that the crisis is beyond its control or was not caused by intentional actions.	No statement was found indicating that the accident was entirely beyond PT KAI's control, which could serve as a basis for reducing the company's liability.	Not Found
Diminish	Justification	A message that acknowledges the crisis but is accompanied by a rational explanation to mitigate public perceptions regarding the severity of the impact or the organization's responsibility.	PT KAI explained that the evacuation was carried out carefully and in a coordinated manner, and that operational restrictions were implemented as measures to ensure passenger safety.	Posts 2, 11, and 12
Rebuild	Compensation	A message indicating that assistance or compensation is being provided to victims and those affected as an effort to restore public trust in the organization.	PT KAI has provided various forms of support for the victims and their families, including medical assistance, financial aid, educational support, and ongoing assistance.	Posts 1-12
Rebuild	Apology	A message expressing apologies, condolences, regret, and concern for the victims, their families, and those affected by the crisis.	PT KAI extends its apologies and condolences to the victims and their families as a gesture of concern for the impact of the accident.	Posts 1, 5, 7, 11, and 12
Bolstering	Reminder	A message designed to remind the public of the organization's contributions, positive values, and commitment to providing services and ensuring safety.	PT KAI has once again reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring travel safety, improving service quality, and restoring operations during the crisis.	Posts 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12
Bolstering	Ingratiation	A message expressing recognition, appreciation, or gratitude to stakeholders to strengthen the organization's relationship with the public.	PT KAI would like to express its appreciation to the public, customers, and relevant parties for their support, prayers, and concern during	Posts 8, 9, 10, and 12

SCCT Strategy	Indicators	Operational Definition	Findings	Data Units
			the crisis response process.	
Bolstering	Victimage	A message that portrays the organization as a party that is also feeling the emotional impact or consequences of the crisis, without intending to shirk responsibility.	PT KAI expresses its condolences and solidarity with the victims, their families, and the community, who have also been emotionally affected by the accident.	Posts 1 and 7

Deny Strategy

Based on Table 1, which presents the results of the analysis of 12 Instagram posts from @keretaapikita, the denial strategy was not found in any of its three indicators : attacking the accuser, denial, and scapegoating. PT KAI never attacked those who voiced criticism, did not deny that accidents occurred, and did not shift blame to other parties such as field personnel, third parties, or external factors beyond the company's control.

These findings indicate that from the outset of its crisis management, PT KAI chose to acknowledge the incident and focus on disseminating official information, assisting victims, and updating the public on the progress of the accident response. Through this approach, the company sought to maintain the credibility of its information and demonstrate an open attitude toward the public, reflecting a communication style that avoids defensiveness. In Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), the deny strategy is employed when an organization believes the crisis is not its responsibility, leading it to deny involvement or shift blame for the crisis onto another party. However, the results of this study indicate that PT KAI did not employ a deny strategy. Although train accidents fall under the category of “accidental cluster” which are generally associated with a lower level of crisis accountability. PT KAI chose to prioritize communication that emphasized transparency and accountability, rather than denying the incident. This was clearly evident in the first post, which expressed condolences and an apology to the victims and their families.

Diminish Strategy

Based on Table 1, the excuse indicator was not found in any of the posts. Thus, PT KAI never attempted to claim that the accident was entirely beyond the company's control. Conversely, the justification indicator was found in posts 2 (April 28), 11 (May 8), and 12 (May 9). In post 2, PT KAI explained that the evacuation process which took approximately eight hours was carried out with caution and in a coordinated manner to ensure passenger safety. Thus, the justification provided emphasized the handling process rather than downplaying the number of affected passengers. The same pattern is also evident in posts 11 and 12, where delays in the Cikarang Commuter Line service were explained as a result of speed restrictions implemented to facilitate track inspections aimed at ensuring travel safety. In conveying this information, PT KAI consistently used justification by first acknowledging the severity of the situation faced by the victims and their families, before explaining the technical reasons behind the decisions made. Consequently, no excuse indicators were found in any of the posts, as the company did not attempt to find reasons to absolve itself of responsibility. This limited use of the justification strategy indicates that the Diminish strategy serves only a supporting role, rather than as PT KAI's primary approach to responding to the crisis in Fig. 1. The explanations provided by the company serve primarily to provide context regarding the operational actions and decisions taken during the crisis management process, rather than to avoid or shirk responsibility.



Fig. 1. PT KAI's justification regarding the process of handling victims as an indicator of justification

Rebuild Strategy

Based on Table 1, the rebuild strategy was the dominant strategy used by PT KAI, as evidenced by the compensation and apology indicators. Compensation. The compensation indicator was found in all posts from 1 through 12 published between April 28 and May 9, 2026, ranging from customer support, trauma healing services, follow-up services, and the return of customers' belongings, to the provision of educational guarantees for the children of victims who died. In Post 5 (April 30) in Fig. 2, PT KAI distributed financial assistance to the victims' families as a form of direct compensation. Meanwhile, in post 6 (May 1) in Fig. 3, PT KAI provided educational support to the children of victims who died in East Bekasi as a form of long-term non-financial compensation. These various forms of compensation demonstrate that PT KAI is not only addressing short-term needs but is also striving to ensure long-term support for the families of the victims left behind. These measures demonstrate that PT KAI is not merely offering verbal expressions of concern but is also providing concrete forms of support to those affected.



Fig. 2. Distribution of financial assistance to the victims' families as a form of compensation



Fig. 3. Providing educational support for the children of deceased victims as a form of long-term compensation

Apology

The apology indicators identified in posts 1 (April 28), 5 (April 30), 7 (May 2), 11 (May 8), and 12 (May 9) are marked by PT KAI's expression of deep regret to the victims and their families in Fig. 4. These apologies were conveyed starting with the very first post following the incident, clearly titled "Apology and Deep Condolences from KAI," and reappeared in subsequent posts, particularly in posts 11 and 12, which addressed operational delays. This repetition of the apology demonstrates the consistency of PT KAI's responsible stance throughout the crisis, rather than merely a momentary response at the outset of the incident. The apology was conveyed alongside expressions of condolences and the company's commitment to addressing the impact of the accident.



Fig. 4. PT KAI extends its deepest condolences and apologies

According to the SCCT, the rebuild strategy is used to repair an organization's relationship with the public through the expression of apologies and the provision of compensation. The combination of compensation and apologies in the PT KAI case underscores that this strategy is not merely symbolic but is also manifested through concrete actions, ranging from covering medical expenses,

providing financial assistance, guaranteeing educational support, and offering ongoing assistance through information centers. The combination of the apology and compensation indicators suggests that the rebuild strategy is implemented through two complementary forms of response. The apology indicator reflects the company's acknowledgment and regret regarding the impact caused by the crisis, while the compensation indicator is manifested through the provision of more concrete support to those affected. The combination of these two indicators forms a communication pattern that emphasizes accountability, given that this transportation accident not only caused operational disruptions but also had a direct impact on the victims and their families.

Bolstering Strategy

Based on Table 1, the bolstering strategy was identified in three indicators: reminders, ingratiation, and victimization. The reminder indicator was found in nearly all posts 1 (April 28), 2 (April 28), 3 (April 29), 6 (May 1), 7 (May 2), 8 (May 3), 9 (May 4), 10 (May 6), 11 (May 8), and 12 (May 9), which reaffirmed PT KAI's commitment to travel safety, service improvement, and operational enhancements. These messages were consistently conveyed in most posts to demonstrate that the company remains committed to providing the best service even in the face of a crisis. For example, the use of phrases such as "continuing to strive," "committed," and "ensuring" repeatedly appeared as indicators of this strategy, as seen in Post 11, where the caption states, "KAI is committed to ensuring that the operational recovery process and customer service proceed smoothly." Ingratiation. Indicators of ingratiation were found in posts 8 (May 3), 9 (May 4), 10 (May 6), and 12 (May 9), which took the form of PT KAI's expressions of gratitude to the public and customers for their support, prayers, and concern during the recovery process marked by the use of the hashtag #Railfriends as a form of emotional appeal to the public in Fig. 5. This strategy serves to strengthen the emotional bond between the organization and the public and to foster sympathy amid a crisis.



Fig. 5. A tahlilan and communal prayer, accompanied by expressions of gratitude to the community as a gesture of ingratiation

Victimage

The victimage indikator identified in posts 1 (April 28) and 7 (May 2) show that PT KAI was also affected by the accident in Fig. 6. However, this messaging was not used to avoid responsibility, but rather as a way to affirm that the company shares in the grief and is committed to prompt recovery efforts. In Post 7, the visuals featuring flowers, photos of the tragedy, and messages of condolence from the public at the scene are accompanied by the caption "We recover together, we are strong together." This message fosters a sense of solidarity between the organization and the public.



Fig. 6. The public's support and prayers are portrayed as a form of victimage

In SCCT, the bolstering strategy aims to reinforce positive perception of an organization by affirming organizational values, acknowledging stakeholders, and strengthening emotional bonds. The findings indicate that PT KAI used bolstering through reminder, ingratiation, and victim age, particularly by emphasizing safety commitments, appreciating public support, and expressing solidarity with those affected by the accident (Chunxia et al., 2022). In this framework, the bolstering strategy serves as a complement to the rebuild strategy. Statements regarding a commitment to safety, recognition of the public, and affirmation of the organization's positive values can strengthen relationships with the public. However, this strategy does not replace the forms of accountability demonstrated through apologies and compensation.

The findings of this study enrich previous research on PT KAI's crisis communication. Nursabila et al. (2025) showed that PT KAI's responses to passengers' emotional complaints on social media tended to be rushed. However, this study found a more structured communication pattern involving apologies, compensation, and messages of support in the wake of major accidents. On the other hand, Wianda et al. (2025) categorized disruptions caused by flooding as a "victim crisis" because they were influenced by factors beyond the organization's control. In contrast, the accident in East Bekasi falls under the category of an accident crisis. Nevertheless, PT KAI predominantly employed recovery and reinforcement strategies. This suggests that the severity of the crisis's impact, as well as the need to restore public relations, also influenced the company's crisis response.

These findings indicate that although the Argo Bromo Anggrek train accident and the KRL Commuter Line incident in East Bekasi fall within an "accidental cluster" which, theoretically, could still provide the organization with an opportunity to employ denial or responsibility-minimization strategies, PT KAI instead chose a crisis communication approach focused on accountability and relationship restoration. This strategic choice underscores that in a crisis with severe consequences and loss of life, the communication response can be influenced not only by the theoretical classification of the crisis group but also by the severity and consequences of the incident, particularly its impact on the victims and their families. The presence of multiple indicators in a single post indicates that the SCCT strategy can be implemented simultaneously. This is because a single carousel post can incorporate various complementary communication functions (Che & Nan, 2022).

The findings of this study can enrich the results of a previous study [Alfi & Alfa \(2026\)](#) that examined crisis communication during the East Bekasi accident through the Social-Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC) approach by analyzing the content of the @kai121_ account, online media coverage, and public responses. While that study focused on the dynamics of crisis communication and audience response patterns, this study more specifically identifies the strategic functions of PT KAI's messages via the @keretaapikita account based on the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) perspective.

The dominant rebuilds and bolstering strategies indicate that PT KAI's official communications not only serve to convey information but also demonstrate accountability through posts expressing apologies and offering compensation. Furthermore, this communication serves to strengthen relationships with the public by conveying a commitment to safety, appreciation, and solidarity. This difference in focus demonstrates that crisis communication analyses of the same event can yield complementary insights. The SMCC approach helps explain the relationship between organizational messages and public responses, while SCCT provides insight into the strategic functions embedded in organizational messages.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the crisis communication pattern employed by PT Kereta Api Indonesia's (PT KAI) through its Instagram account @keretaapikita in response to the train accident in East Bekasi did not utilize all the strategies outlined in the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). Of the four strategies analyzed, rebuild and bolstering were the most dominant, as indicated by the provision of compensation, expressions of apology, reaffirmation of safety commitments, appreciation for public support, and expressions of solidarity with affected parties. Meanwhile, the diminish strategy was used only to a limited extent through the justification indicator, while the deny strategy was not identified in the analyzed posts. These findings indicate that PT KAI employs a crisis communication strategy that emphasizes accountability and relationship-oriented communication, rather than denying responsibility.

These findings have practical implications for PT KAI and other public transportation companies in developing crisis communication strategies through social media. A combination of factual information, accountability through apologies and support for victims, and empathetic communication can be considered when responding to crises that impact the public. However, this study did not measure public perception. Therefore, these findings cannot be used to conclude that these strategies successfully restored the company's image or public trust.

This study has limitations, as it analyzed only 12 posts from a single social media platform and relied on a coding process conducted by a single researcher. This could potentially introduce subjectivity in the interpretation of the data. Additionally, social media content may change over time through editing, deletion, or the addition of information after the study period ends. Future research could expand the data sources by examining other social media platforms, analyzing public comments and audience responses, conducting interviews or surveys, and comparing several crisis cases involving public transportation organizations. Future research could also involve multiple coders to enhance analytical credibility and examine how the crisis responsibility attribution, the crisis history, and prior relational reputation influence the selection and acceptance of response strategies based on SCCT.

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