

Mitigating Moral Emotions After Crises: A Reconceptualization of Organizational Responses

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Abstract-

Crises evoke a broad palette of negative moral emotions. However, past research has almost exclusively investigated anger. Building on insights from constructivist and social-functionalist theories of emotions, this conceptual article develops an account of how anger, disgust and contempt influence evaluators' responses to crises and conceptualizes the organizational responses that mitigate each of these emotions. While anger focuses attention on the transgression itself, contempt and disgust are associated, respectively, with broader concerns about the transgressor's competence and moral character. Consequently, to mitigate negative emotions other than anger, organizational response strategies should do more than merely match attributions of situational responsibility. By matching the response strategy's attention focus (on the transgression versus the transgressor) and interpretation focus (on harm versus moral character versus competence) with the evaluators' emotions, organizations can attempt to mitigate combinations of anger, disgust and contempt. This paper shows that, while strategies attempting to mitigate anger aim primarily to improve perceptions of the crisis, responses to disgust and contempt aim to shift the perception of the transgressing organization. The paper extends our understanding of crisis management by exploring the role of discrete emotions, by extending the notion of matching as a key mechanism to mitigate evaluators' negative emotions, and by examining how organizations should respond to the specific threat posed by distinct negative emotions.

Index Terms- Crisis management; Crisis response; Crisis communications; Moral emotions; Moral transgression;

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