

**NEWS MEDIA FRAMING OF PRE-  
VENTABLE CRISIS CLUSTERS.  
CASE STUDY:  
NEWBORN BABIES KILLED IN THE  
FIRE AT A ROMANIAN HOSPITAL**

Camelia CMECIU

Cristina COMAN

Monica PĂTRUȚ

Fănel TEODORAȘCU

**Camelia CMECIU**

Associate Professor, Faculty of Communication Studies,  
Danubius University of Galați, Galați, Romania  
Tel.: 0040-722-398.542  
E-mail: cmeciu75@yahoo.com

**Cristina COMAN**

Professor, Faculty of Journalism and Communication  
Studies, University of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania  
Tel.: 0040-744-644.495  
E-mail: cristinacoman2004@yahoo.com

**Monica PĂTRUȚ**

Lecturer, Faculty of Letters, Vasile Alecsandri University  
of Bacău, Bacău, Romania  
Tel.: 0040-742-049.099  
E-mail: monicapatrut@yahoo.com

**Fănel TEODORAȘCU**

Teaching Assistant, Faculty of Communication Studies,  
Danubius University of Galați, Galați, Romania  
Tel.: 0040-720-014.564  
E-mail: fanelteodorascu@yahoo.com

**Abstract**

In crisis situations, public or private organizations become vulnerable. When organizations adopt the silence strategy, the public seeks information in the news media which may induce the attribution of crisis responsibility. The crisis managers should check the news media framing of the (organizational and/or individual) responsibility level, the news practices of daily and tabloid press and the journalists' use of the crisis issues and news frames of the situation. Our study will focus on one of the greatest tragedies in Romania, the newborn babies' death during the 2010 fire at the Giulești Maternity Hospital in Bucharest. The comparative analysis focuses on the news media coverage of this crisis in the online versions of four national newspapers with the largest circulation. The content analysis highlights the crisis news frames and issues in Romanian daily and tabloid newspapers. The findings suggest that, despite the same salience of crisis frames (attribution of responsibility, human interest, economic consequences, conflict, morality), the sensationalist and sober news stories differ in three ways: the assigning of the level of responsibility, the crisis issues associated with the five frames, and the coverage of the micro and macro-relations established between the organizations during the crisis situation.

**Keywords:** Giulești Maternity Hospital, Romania, frames, crisis issues, tabloid press, daily press.

## 1. Introduction

On August 16, 2010, around 6.00 PM, a blast followed by a fire took place at a Romanian maternity hospital (Panait Sarbu Clinical Hospital of Obstetrics and Gynecology, also known as Giulești Maternity Hospital in Bucharest). It killed four premature newborns, two more babies dying after several days. Caused by an electrical fault in the air conditioning system, the fire burned the Intensive Care Ward of Giulești Maternity Hospital completely, killing four newborns on the spot and causing serious burns to other eight babies. The pictures of the firefighters holding the babies, of the burned incubators, the blackened room and the melted equipment had a profound emotional appeal, thus drawing considerable press attention. The questions raised by the Romanian news media immediately were: (1) How could a fire spread so quickly without being noticed by the staff of the IC Unit of Giulești Maternity? (2) Where were the medical nurses who were supposed to take care of the newborn babies in the IC Unit? These questions reflect the fact that 'crises and disasters are, by definition, abnormal, dynamic, and unpredictable events' (Seeger, 2006, p. 241) and that 'a crisis can violate the expectations that stakeholders hold about how organizations should act' (Coombs, 2007, p. 3). Maternity hospitals, as all organization, should have a proper crisis communication system (Coman, 2009a, p. 152) in order to keep stakeholders permanently informed, to avoid silence responses, and to maintain regular media relations. The scarce number of statements provided by the Giulești Maternity representatives showed that it did not have a crisis management plan.

The research on the Romanian health system has mainly focused on medical organizations: studies on the organizational diagnosis in hospitals (Baba *et al.*, 2009), on leadership within the healthcare reform (Hințea *et al.*, 2009) or analyses of improper crisis management in hospitals (Coman, 2009b).

Besides the organization which goes through a crisis situation, the local and/or national authorities or rescue organizations, journalists constitute one important actor. Timothy W. Coombs (2007, pp. 119-120) considers that news media should be included within the external stakeholder network of the organizations' crisis knowledge map. The journalists' framing of the crisis in the news may have significant implications for the public understanding and for the moral evaluations of the issues, organizations, and social actors involved in the (un)predictable event.

Our comparative analysis of the sober and sensationalist news coverage of the crisis situation at the Giulești Maternity provides a new strand of research into the Romanian health system. Our study of the media coverage of the Giulești Maternity crisis situation is meant as a practical insight for Romanian hospital managers who should become aware of the types of frames and crisis issues used in the Romanian daily and sensationalist news media.

## 2. The Giulești Maternity fire – preventable crisis cluster

The Giulești Maternity has the reputation of being one of the best hospitals in Bucharest. It is also known as the hospital where many Romanian celebrities gave birth

to their children. Despite this, the death of six babies revealed the organization did not have a pre-event planning, an aspect which M.W. Seeger (2006, p. 237) considers of vital importance in crisis situations. At the same time, the opacity of the hospital officials, who preferred not to provide sufficient information to their stakeholders, showed that the hospital representatives did not use two practices which are mentioned in the literature: (1) to be truthful, honest, frank, and open (Covello, 2003, p. 6) and (2) 'to deliver on the promise to be the first and best source of information' (Heath, 2006, p. 248). During the crisis, no press releases or official statements were posted on the Giulești Maternity website.

Attila Cseke, the Romanian Health Minister, described the fire at the Giulești Maternity as 'one of the darkest tragedies in the history of the Romanian healthcare system' (Adevărul, August 17, 2010). The fire at the Giulești Maternity may be included in what Timothy W. Coombs (2007, p. 142) defines as the preventable crisis cluster since it was provoked by a twofold human-error accident and organizational mismanagement: (1) the improper maintenance system: the fire was caused by the improper isolation of an electrical cable in the air-conditioning system; and (2) the absence of a nurse in the IC unit. When the fire started, the nurse was not in the room because she needed to go to the toilet and her colleague, who was supposed to replace her, was in a surgery, as she stated during the hearings.

The Giulești Maternity management should have considered that a preventable crisis cluster produces very strong attributions of organizational crisis responsibility and that a silence response will trigger a lack of control and credibility. Within this information void created by the Giulești Maternity, the Romanian news media were the main source of information for the key stakeholders and the Romanian public.

The lack of transparency determined us to analyze the Romanian media coverage of this crisis situation. A media content analysis, in terms of crisis issues and news frames, may have a threefold practical rationale for hospital communication departments:

1. It provides an evaluation of the reputational threat provoked by the hospital's silence response;
2. It reveals the types of frames used by different types of mass media (daily versus tabloid newspapers) during crisis situations;
3. It makes hospital management departments become aware that news media are important stakeholders and that constant media relations have a beneficial outcome upon the organizational reputation.

### **3. Theoretical background: framing theory**

News media shape public opinion by selecting and making certain news stories more salient. Besides the setting of the public agenda, news media also provide assessment of the published content. Frames are used to make sense of information or an occurrence (Goffman, 1974, p. 21), providing 'principles for the organization of social reality' (Hertog and McLeod, 2001, p. 140). News frames are 'conceptual tools

which media and individuals rely on to convey, interpret and evaluate information' (Neuman *et al.*, 1992, p. 60). Frames rely on the selection of 'some aspects of a perceived reality' which are made 'more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described' (emphasis by R.M. Entman, 1993, p. 52). The news frames provided by media during crisis situations serve as interpretation guidelines for different stakeholders, especially when the organization involved in the respective crisis adopts the silence strategy. At the same time, organizations should take into account two aspects:

1. Media frames may emphasize some aspects of a certain issue above others (Valentini and Romenti, 2011, p. 361) and thus may introduce bias by omitting essential information about the crisis;
2. Media frames may influence the public's evaluation of organizational responsibility for the crisis event (Cho and Gower, 2006, p. 420).

We consider that the framing model is relevant and useful for two reasons: (1) It helps audiences 'locate, perceive, identify, and label' the flow of information around them (Goffman, 1972, p. 21); and (2) The organization, the selection of content and thematic structure of a news message may 'render particular thoughts applicable, resulting in their activation and use in evaluation' (Price *et al.*, 1997, p. 286). Organizations should consider the types of frames that news media use in interpreting crisis situations so that they may adapt their future crisis response strategies to the information needs of different news practices. The literature (Connell, 1998; Sparks, 2000) shows that whereas the sensationalist discourse framed in tabloid media focuses plain and simple on credulity, the rationalist discourse framed in daily media is informative and insightful.

#### **4. Method and research questions**

We used content analysis as a method for framing research (Wimmer and Dominick, 1997, p. 114), since it is seen as a 'reality check, in which the portrayal of a certain group, phenomenon, trait, or characteristic is assessed against a standard taken from real life'. The analysis of the media coverage of the crisis situation which took place at the Giulești Maternity Hospital in 2010 had two reasons: on the one hand, the emotional impact of the tragic outcome (six dead newborn babies), and on the other hand, the extensive media coverage of this dreadful event (August 16, 2010 – October 22, 2010).

The study employs both a deductive and an inductive method. We used a deductive method by seeking to assess the differences in the use of the crisis news frames among the tabloid and daily media coverage of the fire at the Giulești Maternity. In the existing literature (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000; An and Gower, 2009; Valentini and Romenti, 2011), five crisis news frames are mentioned:

- Attribution of responsibility frame: attributing responsibility for the cause or solution of an event, problem, or issue;

- Conflict frame: reflecting the conflict between individuals, groups, and organizations;
- Economic consequences frame: reporting an event, problem, or issue in terms of the consequences it will have financially on an individual, groups, organizations, or countries;
- Human interest frame: bringing a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem;
- Morality frame: placing the event, problem, or issue in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions.

The attribution of responsibility frame is essential to the organizational reputation. In the literature (Iyengar, 1991; An, Gower and Cho, 2011), two types of responsibility are mentioned: the episodic news frame/individual responsibility (focusing on certain individuals or specific events) versus the thematic news frame/organizational responsibility (placing issues and events in a general context like a society). We will associate the individual versus organizational responsibility with a negative versus a positive aspect:

- A negative responsibility, in terms of assigning the blame for this tragedy (the nurse, the electrician, the hospital or the whole medical system should be blamed);
- A positive responsibility, in terms of the solutions (rescue and legal actions) provided to diminish the damages and to punish the guilty persons (the prosecutors or the firefighters).

Studies (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000; An and Gower, 2009; Valentini and Romenti, 2011) on preventable crisis cluster and on the daily versus tabloid media coverage of organizations facing crisis revealed the following aspects: (1) the attribution of responsibility frame is predominant in crises focused on the preventable cluster and caused by the management; (2) the human interest and morality frames are mainly used in victim cluster news and in preventable crisis news with a high degree of controllability and intentionality; (3) the sober and serious media outlets use more often the attribution of responsibility, conflict, and economic frames, whereas the sensationalist media outlets use the human interest frame.

The inductive method was used for an in-depth analysis of the news articles in order to find the types of issues framed. We coded the issues in five main categories: (1) victims (dead newborn babies, babies who survived, and their families); (2) rescuers (firefighters); (3) investigation (causes: electrician, nurse; authorities in charge with the investigation: prosecutors); (4) micro-relations (Giulești Maternity Hospital – patients, Giulești Maternity Hospital manager – staff); (5) macro-relations (Giulești Maternity Hospital – other maternity hospitals from Bucharest, Government/ Ministry of Health – Romanian doctors). In terms of the two types of responsibility framing, we associated the individual responsibility with the electrician who was responsible for the maintenance system and the nurse who was supposed to be in the IC Unit at the time of the fire, and the organizational responsibility with the micro- and macro-relations mentioned above.

In this study we aim to investigate how the Romanian daily and tabloid press framed the Giulești maternity's crisis whose tragic outcome was the death of six newborn babies. Based on previous discussions on news frames during crisis situations, we will examine the salience of the five news frames and the types of crisis issues used by the Romanian press, and the difference between the Romanian daily and tabloid press in framing this event.

Our study will focus on the following research questions:

RQ1: Which issues about the Giulești Maternity Hospital crisis were covered by the Romanian daily and tabloid press?

RQ2: Which was the salience of the five news frames used in the crisis news coverage?

RQ3: Do the Romanian daily and tabloid newspapers use different crisis issues and news frames when covering the Giulești Maternity Hospital crisis?

#### **4.1. Data**

The data included 261 news articles published in four Romanian online newspapers with the largest national circulation: *Libertatea*, *Adevărul*, *Cancan*, and *Jurnalul Național* (BRAT). We divided these newspapers in two categories: daily newspapers (*Adevărul* and *Jurnalul Național*) and tabloid newspapers (*Libertatea* and *Cancan*). The media coverage of the Giulești Maternity crisis was the following:

- Daily newspapers: *Adevărul* – 56 news articles (August 17, 2010 – October 22, 2010); *Jurnalul Național* – 67 news articles (August 17, 2010 – October 21, 2010);
- Tabloid newspapers: *Libertatea* – 40 news articles (August 16, 2010 – October 6, 2010); *Cancan* – 99 news articles (August 16, 2010 – September 3, 2010).

#### **4.2. Coding procedure**

The news articles from the Romanian daily and tabloid press were analyzed in terms of news stories. As a news article embedded more news stories, our final data included 2,853 news stories (1,816 news stories from the daily newspapers and 1,037 news stories from the tabloid newspapers). We divided each news story in units of analysis under the form of crisis issues embedded within the journalist's reporting the events (e.g. the fire, the rescue operations, the investigation, etc.), the victims' testimonies, the relations among the hospital and its stakeholders (e.g. Giulești hospital – patients, Giulești hospital – other hospitals). Each news story was thematically assigned to one of the five news frames: attribution of responsibility, conflict, economic consequences, human interest, and morality. The news frames are 'clusters of facts or judgments' (Entman, 1993, p. 5) whose central and peripheral concepts can be coded through keywords, sentences, or paragraphs that focus on the same crisis issue. We coded all 2,853 news stories and in order to determine inter-coder reliability (Kappa) and the coefficient of agreement was computed to be 0.91, considered to be acceptable by researchers.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1. Frequency of crisis issues in daily and tabloid newspapers

The Giulești Maternity fire was a preventable crisis cluster with violent consequences. For such a crisis pattern, organizations should know that newspapers tend to frame the emotional appeal attached to the crisis victims and the responsible actors. As Table 1 shows, both daily and tabloid newspapers used victims as the most salient issue. The discrepancy between Romanian daily and tabloid newspapers lies in the way in which they frame the issues related to crisis responsibility. The tabloid newspapers focused on individual responsibility (nurse and electrician) and on humanitarian aid (other Maternity Hospitals). The daily newspapers focused on organizational responsibility (Giulești Maternity – patients) closely associated with the deficient social macro-relations between the Romanian Government/Ministry of Health and Romanian doctors. The frequency of the ten crisis issues in Romanian daily and tabloid newspapers shows that the press interest in preventable crisis cluster is different. Romanian tabloid news stories provided more issue framings on stakeholders' individual stories (the nurse), whereas the daily news stories focused on issues embedded in a broader social, economic, and judicial context: the chronic underfunding of the Romanian hospitals and the cutting of the medical staff in 2010.

**Table 1:** Crisis issues in the Romanian daily and tabloid newspapers

Crisis issues		Daily newspapers		Tabloid newspapers	
		No. issues	%	No. issues	%
Victims		370	20.37	343	33.07
Rescuers		62	3.41	45	4.33
Investigation	Electrician	108	5.94	112	10.80
	Nurse	264	14.53	166	16
	Prosecutors	195	10.73	68	6.55
Micro-relations	Giulești Maternity Hospital – patients	272	14.97	95	9.16
	Giulești Maternity Hospital manager – staff	52	2.86	18	1.73
Macro-relations	City Hall – Giulești Maternity Hospital	144	7.92	81	7.86
	Giulești Maternity Hospital – other maternity Hospitals	82	4.57	85	8.19
	Government/ Ministry of Health – doctors	267	14.70	23	2.31
Total issues		1,816	100	1,037	100

### 5.2. Salience of crisis news frames – daily versus tabloid newspapers

In terms of crisis news frames, both the Romanian daily and the tabloid newspapers chose the same salience of frames: (1) attribution of responsibility, (2) human interest, (3) economic consequences, (4) conflict, and (5) morality. As Table 2 shows, the attribution of responsibility covers more than half of the news stories in the daily and tabloid newspapers. Although both types of newspapers provided the same hierarchy of frames for the Giulești Maternity tragedy, a difference may be observed in the frequency of these frames. The human interest and economic consequences are the next two frames covered. Whereas the human interest frame (35%) is more salient in the tabloid news articles, the economic consequence frame (17.67%) prevails in the daily

newspapers. The conflict and morality frames were the last two frames used. Even if these two frames are rarely used, they differ in their frequency: the conflict frame (7.70% of the daily news stories and 5.20% of the tabloid news stories), the morality frame (1.08% of the daily news stories, 5.03 % of the tabloid newspapers).

**Table 2:** Crisis news frames in the Romanian daily and tabloid newspapers

Crisis news frames	Romanian daily newspapers		Romanian tabloid newspapers	
	No. frames	%	No. frames	%
Attribution of responsibility	886	48.78	473	45.61
Conflict	140	7.70	54	5.20
Economic consequences	321	17.67	95	9.16
Human interest	450	24.77	363	35
Morality	19	1.08	52	5.03
Total frames	1,816	100	1,037	100

Our findings confirm An and Gower’s study (2009) on the choice of crisis news frames for preventable crisis clusters. In their study, the two most predominant frames were the attribution of responsibility and human interest. Although the sensationalist news stories did not use the human interest as the most salient frame, they laid more emphasis on the empathy towards the nurse and the victims than the sober news stories did. At the same time, our study reveals that both daily and tabloid newspapers focused on the economic consequences as the third most salient frame. Tragedies or disasters which cause people’s death bring into discussion the economic situation of the respective organization at the micro and at the macro-level. This constitutes the main reason for which both daily and tabloid newspapers used crisis issues focused on micro-relations (Giulești Maternity Hospital – patients, staff) and on macro-relations (Giulești Maternity Hospital – City Hall, other maternities; Government/Ministry of Health – Romanian doctors).

### 5.3. Crisis news frames by crisis issues

We cross correlated crisis news frames with crisis issues (see Table 3) in order to provide an insight into the way in which Romanian daily and tabloid newspapers framed the ten crisis issues related to the tragedy that took place at the Giulești Maternity in Bucharest.

Both daily and tabloid newspapers assigned the highest percentage of attribution of responsibility to legal authorities (prosecutors – 88.71% by the daily newspapers and 89.70% by the tabloid newspapers). In the Romanian daily newspapers, the salience of the crisis issues associated to the attribution of responsibility frame is: electrician (80.55%), nurse (78.40%), Giulești Maternity – other maternities (74.39%), Giulești Maternity manager – staff (69.23%), and rescuers (56.45%).

In the Romanian tabloid newspapers, the salience of the crisis issues associated to the attribution of responsibility frame is: electrician (84.82%), Giulești Maternity manager – staff (77.77%), Giulești Maternity – other maternities (76.47%), rescuers (71.11%), and nurse (66.26%).

**Table 3:** Crisis news frames by crisis issues

Romanian newspapers	Crisis news frames	Crisis issues %									
		Victims	Rescuers	Investigation			Micro-relations	Macro-relations			
				Causes		Legal authorities					
				Electrician	Nurse	Prosecutors	Giulești Maternity Hospital -patients	Giulești Maternity Hospital manager -staff	City hall- Giulești Maternity Hospital	Giulești Maternity Hospital – other maternity hospitals	Government/ Ministry of Health - Doctors
Daily newspapers	Attribution of responsibility	0	56.45	80.55	78.40	88.71	43.38	69.23	45.13	74.39	38.95
	Conflict	1.08	1.61	4.62	14.01	4.61	14.70	9.61	0	1.21	14.23
	Economic consequences	2.70	14.51	13.88	2.65	1.02	28.67	21.16	50	6.09	41.94
	Human interest	91.62	27.43	0.95	4.19	5.66	13.25	0	4.87	18.31	4.88
	Morality	4.60	0	0	0.75	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total frames	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Tabloid newspapers	Attribution of responsibility	2.62	71.11	84.82	66.26	89.70	52.63	77.77	33.33	76.47	41.66
	Conflict	2.04	0	6.25	13.85	7.35	3.15	0	0	0	37.5
	Economic consequences	2.04	0	1.78	0.60	2.95	21.05	22.23	65.43	1.17	20.84
	Human interest	79.59	28.89	7.15	16.86	0	22.10	0	1.24	22.36	0
	Morality	13.71	0	0	2.43	0	1.07	0	0	0	0
	Total frames	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Two important aspects may be highlighted at this point:

- Both daily and tabloid newspapers focused on a twofold framing of attribution responsibility: a) positive aspect: prosecutors, other maternities which took over the injured newborn babies, rescuers; b) negative aspect: causes of the fire (electrician, nurse, Giulești Maternity manager – staff).
- The role that the nurse played in this tragedy was differently framed by the Romanian daily and tabloid newspapers. In the daily newspapers, the nurse is considered to be the second person to be blamed, after the electrician. The tabloid newspapers considered that the main causes of the fire were the electrician and the relation between the hospital manager and the staff. The tabloid newspapers even used the human interest (16.86%), as the second type of crisis news frame, when presenting the role of the nurse in this tragedy. The human interest frame in tabloid news practices is consistent with the storytelling devices highlighting the moral value of solidarity with one member of the community/society (Luthar, 1997, pp. 55-56).

The human interest frame is primarily used when presenting the victims (91.62% – daily newspapers, 79.59% – tabloid newspapers), the rescuers (27.43% – daily news-

papers, 28.89% – tabloid newspapers) and the involvement of other maternities in saving the newborn babies (18.31% – daily newspapers, 22.36% – tabloid newspapers).

The conflict and the economic frames mainly focus on issues at the micro-level and at the macro-level, framing organizational responsibility. Giulești Maternity – patients (14.70%), Government/ Ministry of Health – Romanian doctors (14.23%) are the most two prominent issues framed as conflict in the daily news stories, whereas in the tabloid newspapers the conflict frame is associated with Government/ Ministry of Health – Romanian doctors (37.5%) and the nurse (13.85). In the Romanian daily newspapers, the economic consequences frame is mainly linked to macro-relations: the City Hall – Giulești maternity (50%), and Government/ Ministry of Health – Romanian doctors (41.94%). In the Romanian tabloid newspapers, this frame is associated with the macro-relation City Hall – Giulești Maternity (65.43%) and the micro-relation Giulești Maternity – staff (22.23%).

## **6. Framing levels of responsibility – daily versus tabloid news practice**

Hospital crisis managers in Romania should be aware that silence responses in preventable crisis clusters may trigger numerous speculations about the attribution of responsibility. As shown by An, Gower and Cho (2011, p. 79), ‘crisis managers should consider how news media assign the blame for the crisis’ and how the news media may influence people to have a negative attitude toward the organization through their use of a high level of organizational responsibility. Thus a high level of organizational responsibility framing may cause severe reputational damage.

Although victims were the main crisis issue in Romanian daily and tabloid newspapers, the responsibility level assigned to the fire at the Giulești Maternity highlighted different approaches which mainly depend on the information needs of daily and tabloid news practices.

The nurse was an important internal stakeholder whose role in the Giulești tragedy was highly debated. The journalists framed two main scenarios: the nurse as a victim of the Romanian medical system (organizational level of responsibility) and the nurse as an embodiment of negligence (individual level of responsibility).

The tabloid newspapers mainly focused on a twofold news story regarding the nurse:

- on the one hand, a story framing compassion. The testimonies of other mothers who highly appreciated the nurse’s professionalism or the touching story of the nurse’s mother are two reasons for which the nurse is not assigned much of the responsibility for this tragedy. Besides the attribution of responsibility with which the nurse is associated, the frame of human interest is also used. This combination between the attribution of responsibility and human interest in regard to a responsible stakeholder confirms that tabloid newspapers devote ‘relatively much attention to the personal and private life of people, both celebrities and ordinary people’ (Sparks, 2000, p. 10).
- on the other hand, a story framing a decaying medical system. The nurse’s story was presented within a larger context, namely the cutting of the medical staff by

the Romanian Government in August, 2010. This decision led to the assigning of a single nurse in the IC Unit of the Giulești Maternity. This relation between the Romanian Government/Ministry of Health and doctors was the first crisis issue associated with the conflict frame in the tabloid newspapers. Romanian tabloid newspapers framed the attribution of responsibility as a type of a collective guilt and the nurse was depicted as a victim of the Romanian medical system. They insisted on the nurse's past good deeds and highlighted her loyalty to the hospital and devotion towards premature newborns.

In Romanian daily newspapers, the role played by the nurse in the Giulești tragedy is associated with the attribution of responsibility and conflict frames. The daily news stories focused on the nurse's responsibilities as they are presented in her job description and on her false testimonies about the time she was absent from the IC Unit. This emphasis on the nurse is visible at the level of the time span of the media coverage. Whereas the tabloid newspapers covered the Giulești Maternity tragedy up to September 3 (Cancan) and October 6 (Libertatea), the daily newspapers also covered the hearings during the nurse's trial (end of October, 2010).

Despite the assigning of individual responsibility to the nurse instead of using the human interest to frame the news stories about her, Romanian daily newspapers actually focused on the nurse as the fourth salient crisis issue. After the victims, two types of relations were the most important issues in daily newspapers: (1) the Romanian Government/ Ministry of Health – doctors, and (2) the Giulești Maternity – patients. The daily news stories framed these two issues as a twofold conflict, thus using a micro and macro organizational responsibility framing. On the one hand, the macro-conflict caused by the underfunding of the Romanian medical system and by the restructuring of the medical staff, and on the other hand, the micro-conflict caused by the inexistence of a proper crisis management.

Both the sober and the sensationalist news stories highlighted the Giulești Maternity Hospital's lack of communication with its patients. The negative organizational responsibility framing associated to the hospital focused on two major themes: a lack of compassion towards the victims' families and an inconsistency of statements. Timothy W. Coombs (2010, p. 42) considers that in crisis situations with violent consequences (the death of persons), an expression of sympathy or sessions of trauma counseling are the best organizational solutions to show empathy toward the victims' families. In their news stories, journalists highlighted that the Giulești Maternity Hospital misinformed the families about the exact number of dead babies.

We consider that the media framing of responsibility in preventable crisis clusters should refer not only to the individuals or organizations to be blamed for the crisis situation, but also to those individuals or organizations which contributed to the rescue of the victims. Besides the negative responsibility associated with the causes at the micro-level/individual (nurse, electrician) and at the macro-level/organizational (City Hall, Government/Ministry of Health), the positive attribution of responsibility was linked to the rescuers (firefighters) and to other maternity hospitals (e.g. Grigore Al-

exandrescu Hospital). The involvement of other organizations prevented this tragedy from having even more severe consequences. The organizations which are usually in competition may exploit the positive side of the attribution of responsibility frame. The journalists from sensationalist and sober newspapers will frame these rescue activities as stories of compassion and generosity, which will increase their reputation.

Unfortunately this tragedy had to happen in order for the local and national authorities to change something in the Romanian medical system, thus sending what M. Seeger (2006, p. 242) identifies as 'a message of self-efficacy':

1. The Bucharest City Hall provided the necessary funds for the renovations of the Giulești Maternity (it reopened on September 20, 2010) and it required for thorough controls of the electrical systems of the hospitals in Bucharest to take place.
2. The Ministry of Health unblocked 2,322 vacancies in the medical system, but unfortunately the number of unblocked vacancies should be double at the national level.

## **7. Conclusion**

Through a framing analysis of the same event (the fire at the Giulești Maternity Hospital) in the Romanian daily and tabloid newspapers, this research highlighted the types of crisis issues and news frames that journalists reveal in their stories in the case of preventable crisis clusters. Since people seek information related to a crisis in the news media, crisis managers should be aware that media may influence people's perceptions about the attribution of crisis responsibility.

In preventable crisis clusters with violent consequences, as it was the crisis at the Giulești Maternity Hospital, three main frames may prevail: attribution of responsibility, human interest and economic consequences. As our findings revealed, the sober and sensationalist newspapers have a different news practice in the assignment of guilt and responsibility. Whereas the Romanian tabloid newspapers focused on a collective guilt, the daily newspapers insisted on the responsibilities of each individual involved in this tragedy.

Even if most studies on the media framing of crisis management focus on the negative aspect of the attribution of responsibility, namely to find the persons who caused the tragedy, we consider that a crisis situation may have a positive aspect for those organizations which act as rescuers, thus triggering a positive reputation.

The negative responsibility framing at a macro-level implies economic consequences as well. Our analysis showed that the news practice of the sober and sensationalist newspaper regarding this economic frame differs. Whereas the Romanian tabloid newspapers covered the relation between the hospital and other local authorities, the daily newspapers focused on the macro-relation between the national authorities (Romanian Government/ Ministry of Health) and doctors.

This comparative insight into the way in which one of the greatest tragedies in Romania was framed by the Romanian online newspapers is valuable for health organizations. The crisis frames and issues covered by Romanian daily and tabloid news-

papers should be taken into account when health organizations provide their crisis response strategies. Crisis managers of hospitals should always check the crisis news coverage because during crisis situations which involve health issues the news stories may influence the public's perceptions especially when the organization provides an information void. As the findings suggested, the attribution of responsibility is a significant and complex frame for an organization. Its complexity implies the multi-layered responsibility differently assigned by sensationalist and sober newspapers (collective guilt versus individual guilt). Its significance may have vital reputation consequences: a negative reputation for the organization considered responsible for the crisis situation or a positive reputation for the organization responsible for rescuing the victims of the crisis.

### References:

1. An, S-K. and Gower, K.K., 'How Do the News Media Frame Crises? A Content Analysis of Crisis News Coverage', 2009, *Public Relations Review*, vol. 35, no. 2, pp. 107-112.
2. An, S-K., Gower, K.K. and Cho, S.H., 'Level of Crisis Responsibility and Crisis Response Strategies of the Media', 2011, *Journal of Communication Management*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 70-83.
3. Baba, C., Cherecheș, R., Țiclău, T. and Mora, C., 'Organizational Diagnosis – A Management Tool for Change. Case Study in Satu Mare County Hospital', 2009, *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, no. 25E, pp. 32-39.
4. Cho, S.H. and Gower, K.K., 'Framing Effect on the Public's Response to Crisis: Human Interest Frame and Crisis Type Influencing Responsibility and Blame', 2006, *Public Relations Review*, vol. 32, no. 5, pp. 420-422.
5. Coman, C., *Comunicarea de criză: tehnici și strategii*, Iași: Polirom, 2009a.
6. Coman, C., 'Crisis in Health System – Communication Strategies, from Being Ignored to the Efficient Implementation', 2009b, *Management in Health*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 7-12.
7. Connell, J., 'Mistaken Identities: Tabloid and Broadsheet News Discourse', 1998, *Javnost-The Public*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 11-31.
8. Coombs, W.T. and Holladay, S.J., 'Communication and Attributions in a Crisis: An Experiment Study in Crisis Communication', 1996, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 279-295.
9. Coombs, W.T., *Ongoing Crisis Communication. Planning, Managing, and Responding*, London: Sage Publications, 2007.
10. Coombs, W.T., 'Parameters for Crisis Communication', in Coombs, W.T. and Holladay, S.J. (eds.), *The Handbook of Crisis Communication*, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, pp. 17-53.
11. Covello, V.T., 'Best Practices in Public Health Risk and Crisis Communication', 2003, *Journal of Health Communication: International Perspectives*, vol. 8, supplement, pp. 5-8.
12. Entman, R.M., 'Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm', 1993, *Journal of Communication*, vol. 43, no. 4, pp. 51-58.
13. Gamson, W. and Lasch, K.E., 'The Political Culture of Social Welfare Policy', in Spiro, S.E. and Yuchtman-Yaar, E. (eds.), *Evaluating the Welfare State: Social and Political Perspectives*, New York: Academic, 1983, pp. 397-415.

14. Gamson, W. and Modigliani, A., 'Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach', 1989, *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 95, no. 1, pp. 1-37.
15. Goffman, E., *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974.
16. Gordon, C.G. and Kelly, K.S., 'Public Relations Expertise and Organizational Effectiveness: A Study of U.S. Hospitals', 1999, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 143-165.
17. Gross, P., *Colosul cu picioare de lut. Aspecte ale presei românești post-comuniste*, Iași: Polirom, 1999.
18. Heath, R.L., 'Introduction', in Coombs, W.T. and Holladay, S.J. (eds.), *The Handbook of Crisis Communication*, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, pp. 1-13.
19. Hertog, J.K. and McLeod, D.M., 'A Multiperspectival Approach to Framing Analysis: A Field Guide', in Reese, S.D., Gandy, O.H. and Grant, A.E. (eds.), *Framing Public Life: Perspective on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001, pp. 139-162.
20. Hințea, C., Mora, C. and Țicău, T., 'Leadership and Management in the Health Care System: Leadership Perception in Cluj County Children's Hospital', 2009, *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, no. 27E, pp. 89-104.
21. Luthar, B., 'Exploring Moral Fundamentalism in Tabloid Journalism', 1997, *Javnost-The Public*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 49-64.
22. Iyengar, S., *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
23. Neuman, W.R., Just, M.R. and Crigler, A.N., *Common Knowledge*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
24. Price, V., Tewksbury, D. and Powers, E., 'Switching Trains of Thought: The Impact of News Frames on Readers' Cognitive Responses', 1997, *Communication Research*, vol. 24, pp. 481-506.
25. Seeger, M.W., 'Best Practices in Crisis Communication', 2006, *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 232-244.
26. Seltzer, T., Gardner, E., Richard, S. and Callison, C., 'PR in the ER: Managing Internal Organization–Public Relationships in a Hospital Emergency Department', 2012, *Public Relations Review*, vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 128-136.
27. Semetko, H.A. and Valkenburg, P.M., 'Framing European Politics: A Content Analysis of Press and Television News', 2000, *Journal of Communication*, vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 93-109.
28. Shore, D.A., 'Communicating in Times of Uncertainty: The Need for Trust', 2003, *Journal of Health Communication: International Perspectives*, vol. 8, supplement 1, pp. 13-14.
29. Sparks, C., 'Introduction: The Panic over Tabloid News', in Sparks, C. and Tulloch, J. (eds.), *Tabloid Tales: Global Debates over Media Standards*, Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000, pp. 1-41.
30. Valentini, C. and Romenti, S., 'The Press and Alitalia's 2008 Crisis: Issues, Tones, and Frames', 2011, *Public Relations Review*, vol. 37, no. 4, pp. 360-365.
31. Wimmer, R.D., and Dominick, J.R., *Mass Media Research. An Introduction*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997.

32. Wise, K., 'The Oxford Incident: Organizational Culture's Role in an Anthrax Crisis', 2003, *Public Relations Review*, vol. 29, no. 4, pp. 461-472.

***Online Newspapers***

33. Libertatea [Online] available at <http://www.libertatea.ro/>  
34. Adevărul [Online] available at <http://adevarul.ro/>  
35. Cancan [Online] available at <http://www.cancan.ro/>  
36. Jurnalul Național [Online] available at <http://jurnalul.ro/>