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CRISIS MANAGEMENT SKILLS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

(Research article)

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Abstract

It is evident that the crises frequently encountered in primary schools lately are of critical importance for all individuals. Particularly, the way that these crises affect primary school students and the fact that the process is more traumatic. The research aims to identify and reveal the crisis management skills of primary school schoolboards. This research employs a survey design in order to describe the crisis management abilities of primary school administrators through teacher consultation. The universe of the research consists of elementary schools (primary school-secondary school) located in the four central districts within the borders of Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality (Bağlar, Kayapınar, Sur, Yenişehir). A scale was given to the sample, which consisted of 319 primary school teachers. The scale titled "Crisis Management Skills of Primary School Principals (2009)" was used to collect required data. The scale's Cronbach alpha value was determined to be .97. It was discovered that the scale's responses ranged from 3.66 to 3.96, with the "Mostly" level representing the average of all items. Regarding the gender variable, there was no discernible difference in the perceptions of teachers regarding the crisis management abilities of school principals. It was found that there was a significant difference between teachers' opinions on school principals' crisis management skills in terms of seniority variable. A statistically significant difference was observed favoring school principals with 21 years or more of experience. Expert lectures on how school administrators should prioritize crisis management and increase public awareness should be given.

Keywords: Primary schools, crisis, crisis management, administrator skills

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1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction to the problem

Historical accounts and sources state that human communities have occasionally experienced crises and issues stemming from many factors. It may not always be possible for societies and individuals to overcome the problems and crises they face. In this setting, the ability to respond to and handle crises need structure and method in both the social and collective sense. The emergence of crises in the social process and their shattering effects that last for long periods of time can be defined as a situation that is expected to create new problems and effects together with institutional structures. Crises are inevitable as well as indicating a new situation for alternatives and arrangements. In general, crisis can also be defined as a complex problem. Crisis is considered as a possible situation at every moment and process of life. Unquestionably, identifying the factors that lead to a crisis is just as important as finding a solution. While preventing a crisis depends on the rearrangement and intervention of these variables, managing and solving the crisis also requires certain skills. It is noted that crises that are not resolved or have long-lasting impacts have significant degrees of destructiveness. Crises are of critical importance not only for societies and individuals but also for businesses and institutions. Especially major crises threaten the future of a business (Akgeyik, 2003).

Anticipating and managing the crisis situation that may arise in any situation and location and minimizing its effects can be defined as a competence expected by all individuals. Crises that occur or are likely to arise within social institutions frequently affect all social structures in a chain reaction. It is clear that a crisis situation is not a desired situation in terms of all social structures and activities. It can be expressed as a situation observed that the rapid development and changes of today and especially the leaps in technology and communication technologies in recent years have brought many problems and crises with them, contrary to the known situation. In this context, the possibility of uncertainties and innovations entering a crisis-generating process has also started to be a subject of discussion today. It is possible to say that social and individual institutions and elements play a fundamental role or assume responsibility in the management and resolution of crises. Today's quick development and change, particularly the recent advances in communication and technology, have resulted in a number of issues and crises. In this context, the possibility of uncertainties and innovations leading to a crisis has become a topic of discussion today. It is possible to say that social institutions and individuals play a fundamental role or can have responsibility in managing and resolving crises. In this sense, it is imperative to understand, perceive, expect, predict and detect the crisis and develop an appropriate behavior and approach. Crises can have long-term impacts that can produce outcomes that have a cascading effect on various events and phenomena. Natural disasters, which are among the environmental factors, can create crisis situations that are very difficult or impossible to resist (Özen, 2011). While natural activities and events can be earthquakes, floods, fires, storms, crises based on human activities can be counted as economic crises, population growth, excessive urbanization, environmental pollution, wars. Undoubtedly, it does not seem possible to completely eliminate the negative effects of natural or man-made disasters. In this sense, it may be said that anticipating crises

and reducing their impacts is a prerequisite for any situation. The fact that educational organizations are very fragile and open to impact in the face of crises, makes crisis management necessary. It is observed that crises, which have become the basic and current problem of our day, create permanent and destructive problems especially in education and effect other aspects of social life.

1.2. Crisis and crisis management

The Turkish Language Association Dictionary defines crisis as 'a difficult period, depression, or conflict seen in a society, an organization or a country. Crisis can also be expressed as encountering a situation that is contrary to a normal systematic operation, order, and expected situation. Crisis can be expressed as a phenomenon that occurs in every aspect of life and in processes and systems created by humans. The different definitions of crisis lead to various perspectives on how the term is used in disciplines (Boz & İrmiş, 2023). Crisis can be defined as the deactivation or blocking of an operation.

Crisis management is defined as a skill that requires expertise in terms of its effects and processes. "Crisis management consists of various stages." (Özarslan & Diker, 2020). It is not possible to always forecast crises and thereby eliminate them. Crises have positive and negative short-term or long-term effects and results on employees, managers and the business as a whole (Güneş & Beyazıt, 2010). Crises, due to their characteristics, cannot usually be prevented or stopped. All organizations and structures have the risk of facing crises. It may be regarded vital to protect against the negative impacts of crises in order to attain organizational goals. One of the most critical components in maintaining this condition is competent crisis management (Aksu, 2009). This situation can have long-term effects, especially for organizations established to achieve certain goals. Crisis can be expressed as a situation that prevents and eliminates the organization from achieving its goals and development to some extent.

Crises are vital for human life that's why managing crises cannot be ignored. When the subject is primary schools, this issue gains more importance because of their needs and ages. It is clear that the crises frequently encountered in schools in recent years are of critical importance. Especially in primary schools, which are the first level of the education system, the way crises affect students and the fact that the process is more traumatic than in other levels make the solution of these problems a priority. For these reasons, the ability of schoolboards of primary schools to solve and manage crises is a source of interest in terms of the size and effects of crises. The research aims to determine and reveal the crisis management skills of primary school administrators.

1.3. Problem statement

What is the level of Crisis Management Skills of Primary School Administrators? The answer to this question was tried to be obtained by consulting to teachers' opinions.

1. What are the teachers' views on school administrators' crisis management skills?

2. Do School Administrators' crisis management skills show a significant difference according to gender, education level, professional seniority, age and branch?

2. Method

This study is survey-based research since it intends to describe the crisis management skills of primary school administrators by consulting teachers.

2.1. Universe and sample

The universe of the research consists of primary schools (primary school-secondary school) located in four central districts (Bağlar, Kayapınar, Sur, Yenişehir) within the borders of Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality. There are 20 primary schools, 27 secondary schools in the central Bağlar district, 23 primary schools and 26 secondary schools in Kayapınar district, five primary schools and six secondary schools in Sur district, and 23 primary schools and 34 secondary schools in Yenişehir district. Stratified sampling method was used according to the total size in these schools. A total of 319 teachers were included in the sample. The scales of 80 teachers were omitted because they were not filled out according to the data collection standards. Data were collected from 239 scales and it was accepted that this number was sufficient to represent the universe.

Table 1. Distribution of teachers participating in the study by gender

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
female	108	45,4	45,4	45,4
male	130	54,6	54,6	100,0
Total	238	100,0	100,0	

According to the Table 1, teachers who participated in the study, 54.6% (130 people) were male and 45.4% (108 people) were female. It can be stated that the number of male and female teachers was balanced. The study focused on ensuring that the number of male and female teachers was close to one another.

Table 2. Distribution of teachers participating in the study according to their education levels.

Valid	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Associate’s degree	8	3,4
Bachelor degree	187	78,6
Master’s degree	43	18,1
Total	238	100,0

According to the Table 2, 3.4% (8 people) of the teachers in the survey hold an associate degree, 78.6% (187 people) hold a bachelor's degree, and 18.1% (43 people) hold a master's degree. It is clear that the majority of teachers hold a bachelor's degree. It is worth noting that the data shows a low proportion of teachers having an associate's degree.

Table 3. Distribution of teachers participating in the study according to their seniority.

		Frequency	**Percent**
Valid	0-5 years	34	14,3
	6-10 years	39	16,4
	11-15 years	56	23,5
	16-20 years	58	24,4
	21 and more	50	21,0
	Total	237	99,6
Missing	System	1	,4
Total		238	100,0

According to the Table 3, the number of teachers participating in the research according to their seniority is as follows: 0-5 years 14% (34 people), 6-10 years 16.4% (39 people), 11-15 years 23.5% (56 people), 16-20 years 24.4% (58 people), and 21 and up years 21.0% (50 people). The majority of teachers have at least 11 years of experience.

Table 4. Distribution of teachers participating in the study by age

		Frequency	**Percent**
Valid	20-25	12	5,0
	26-30	44	18,5
	31-35	55	23,1
	36-40	58	24,4
	41 and above	69	29,0
	Total	238	100,0

According to the Table 4, it is seen that the majority of teachers (69 people) are 41 years old and above, while other significant percentages are in the 36-40 age range being 24.4% and in the 31-35 age range being 23.1%. The percentage of teachers between the ages of 20-25 who participated in the research is 5.0% (12 people).

Table 5. Distribution of teachers participating in the research im terms of their branches

		Frequency	**Percent**
Valid	Turkish	27	11,3
	Mathematics	23	9,7
	Science	37	15,5
	Social Sciences	22	9,2
	English	32	13,4
	Art/Music	10	4,2
	other	87	36,6

Total	238	100,0

According to the Table 5, the number of teachers by branch is as follows: science 15.5% (37 people), English 13.4% (32 people), Turkish 11.3% (27 people), and other disciplines 36.6% (87 people). In terms of representation, the distribution of teachers by branch can be considered balanced.

2.2. Data Collection Tool

The scale titled "Primary School Principals' Crisis Management Skills" developed by Aksu, A & Deveci, S (2009) was utilized as the data collection tool once the relevant correspondences and permissions were received. The scale has 31 questions in total and is organized as a five-point Likert scale (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Mostly, Always). Also, the scale has three dimention (pre-crisis, crise, post-crisis). In the original version, the scale's Cronbach alpha value was found to be .98 in total. The scale's Cronbach alpha value was found to be .97 in the current study. It is clear that the scale is extremely reliable.

Data Analysis

In order to decide which tests should be applied for data analysis, firstly the data obtained from the participants were tested for normal distribution. The results of the Normality test are given in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			**Shapiro-Wilk**		
	Statistic	**df**	**Sig.**	**Statistic**	**df**	**Sig.**
Average	,133	238	,000	,887	238	,000

Since the number of participants in some subgroups was below 30 and the Kolmogorov Smirnov value ($p=0.00<0.05$) was found to be ($p=0.00<0.05$) non-parametric tests were used to determine normality SPSS performs two tests regarding the normality of the distribution. The first of these is the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. It is based on the principle of testing whether the available data conform to the normal probability distribution of a defined universe. The hypothesis that it tests is the null hypothesis of the form, 'There is no difference between the distribution of the available data and the normal probability distribution' (Can, 2013).Mann Whitney U test was applied for bivariate groups and Kruskal-Wallis test was applied for groups with more than two variables. In order to determine the significant difference between multiple variables where there was a significant difference, Mann-Whitney U test was also applied again in the form of paired groupings.

3. Findings

The analyses and findings regarding the first problem of the research, 'What is the general level of teachers' views on school administrators' crisis management skills?' are given.

Table 7. Item analysis

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
m1	238	36,975	,83241
m2	238	36,723	,80199
m3	238	37,017	,78439
m4	238	39,370	,85204
m5	238	39,664	,87084
m6	238	39,454	,84266
m7	238	38,571	,89335
m8	238	36,681	100,794
m9	238	37,227	,94064
m10	238	37,521	,88201
m11	238	37,353	,98581
m12	238	38,151	,94101
m13	238	39,580	,90842
m14	238	38,235	,90612
m15	238	36,975	102,751
m16	238	39,664	,92716
m17	238	39,118	,90275
m18	238	39,244	,90623
m19	238	38,782	,87020
m20	238	38,613	,92418
m21	238	38,866	,92763
m22	238	39,202	,87988
m23	238	39,412	,94395
m24	238	38,908	,91670
m25	238	38,403	,92762
m26	238	39,286	,94084
m27	238	38,151	,89033
m28	238	38,445	,93060
m29	238	38,571	,93489
m30	238	38,824	,91565
m31	238	39,328	,99561

The responses to the scale range from 3.66 to 3.96, with the average of all items being "Mostly". When the lowest and highest items are analyzed, Item 8 has the lowest score (3.66) among the scale responses. It might be argued that elementary school principals struggle to develop a crisis management strategy or are not adequately involved in the procedures required to do so. It can also be claimed that teachers do not believe school principals are sufficient in this regard. Again, item 5 (They carefully assess every circumstance that may generate a crisis) and item 16 (They ensure employee collaboration during the crisis management process) received the highest score (3.96) on the scale. This finding can be

interpreted as evidence that school principals are more cautious and prepared prior to and during the crisis.

The second sub-problem of the research, 'Do the crisis management skills of school administrators' show a significant difference according to gender, education level, professional seniority, age and branches? The analyses and findings obtained for the question are given below in order.

Table 8. The level of differentiation of crisis management skills of school administrators according to gender

	Gender	**N**	**Mean rank**	**Rank total**	**p**
Mean	female	108	111,94	12090,00	0.12
	male	130	125,78	16351,00	
	Total	238			

As can be seen in the table above, since the mean rank values are close to each other and (p=0.12>0.05), it was found that there was no significant difference between the teachers' opinions on the crisis management skills of school principals in terms of gender variable.

3.1. Findings Regarding the Level of Education Variable

The table showing the differentiation according to the education level of school administrators is given below.

Table 9. The level of differentiation of the crisis management skills of school principals according to the level of education

Ranks					
	Education level	**N**	**Mean rank**	**df**	**p**
Mean	Associate's degree	8	106,06	2	0.55
	Bachelor degree	187	121,98		
	Master's degree	43	111,21		
	Total	238			

The table above shows that there was no significant difference in teachers' perceptions on school principals' crisis management skills based on education level (p=0.55, >0.05).

3.2. Findings on the seniority variable.

The table showing the differentiation according to the seniority of school administrators is given below.

Table 10. Differences in crisis management abilities among school principals in terms of seniority.

Ranks							
	Seniority	**N**	**Mean Rank**	**df**	**p**	**Source of diff.**	**p**
Mean	0-5 years	34	111,94	4	0	"0-5 years"- "21 and above"	0.04
	6-10 years	39	102,26			"6-10 years"- "21 and above"	0.01
	11-15 years	56	108,25			"11-15 years" – "21 and above"	0
	16-20 years	58	124,51				
	21 and above	50	142,51				
	Total	237					

The table above shows a significant difference in teachers' judgments on school principals' crisis management skills based on seniority (p=0.03<0.05). The Mann-Whitney U Test revealed a significant difference in favor of school principals with 21 years of seniority or more compared to those with 0-5 years of service (p=0.04<0.05), 6-10 years of service (p=0.01<0.05), and 11-15 years of service (p=0.00<0.05).

Table 11. The extent of differentiation of school principals' crisis management skills according to mean and age

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Minimum**	**Maximum**
Mean	238	38,462	,67503	1,39	4,81
Age	238	35,378	122,760	1,00	5,00

The table showing the differentiation according to the age of school administrators is given below.

Table 12. The extent of differentiation of school principals' crisis management skills according to age

Ranks							
	age	**N**	**Mean Rank**	**df**	**p**	**Source of difference**	**p**
Mean	20-25 years	12	69,96	4	0	"20-25 years"- "31- 35 years"	0.02
	26-30 years	44	109,44			"20-25 years"- "36- 40 years"	0.01
	31-35 years	55	108,62			"20-25 years"- "41 and above"	0
	36-40 years	58	125,47			"26-30 years"- "41 and above"	0.04
	41 and above	69	138,18			"31- 35 years"- "41 and above"	0.01
	Total	238					

The table above shows a significant difference in teachers' judgments on school principals' crisis management skills based on seniority (p=0.03<0.05). The pairwise comparison Mann-Whitney U Test used to identify whether groups had significant differences revealed that school principals aged 31-35, 36-40, and 41 and above outperformed school principals aged 20-25. It was also shown that there was a considerable difference in favor of school principals

aged 41 and above vs those aged between 26-30 and between 31-35. Findings show as the school principal grows older, so do his or her crisis management abilities.

3.3. Findings regarding the branch variable

The table showing the differentiation according to the branch of school administrators is given below.

Table 13. The level of differentiation of crisis management skills of school administrators according to branches

Ranks					
	Branch	**N**	**Mean Rank**	**df**	**p**
Mean	Turkish	27	110,72	6	0.4
	Mathematics	23	134,54		
	Science	37	118,70		
	Social Sciences	22	130,70		
	English	32	102,02		
	Art/Music	10	94,05		
	Other	87	125,11		
	Total	238			

Table 13 shows that there was no significant difference in teachers' evaluations on school administrators' crisis management skills based on the branch variable, since both mean rank values were near to each other ($p=0.40>0.05$).

4. Discussion, Conclusion, and Suggestions

The study's findings were discussed, and the conclusions and suggestions were presented. It was determined that the majority of the responses to the scale were at the “Mostly” level. According to the teachers' perspectives, school principals were not well-prepared for crisis management and did not develop a systematic plan. Döş and Cömert, (2012) found a similar finding. It has been determined that elementary school administrators have difficulty developing a crisis management plan or are not adequately involved in the procedures required to develop one. Primary school principals may struggle to prepare a crisis management plan or may not be sufficiently involved in the practices required to do so. It might also be claimed that instructors do not believe school principals are sufficient in this regard.

When the study's findings are compared to the literature, they are consistent with some research, while others have shown opposing results. The study revealed that school principals were more cautious and prepared before and throughout the crisis. There was no significant variation in teachers' perceptions of school principals' crisis management skills based on their gender. When the literature was examined, similar results were found. In another study, different results were obtained depending on the gender variable. 'It may be claimed that teachers' opinions on crisis management differ depending on gender' (Gezer, 2020). “When the

averages of all survey questions are considered, teachers rate school principals' crisis management skills as extremely high" (Töre, 2020). There was no substantial difference in teachers' perceptions of school principals' crisis management skills across education levels. There was a substantial variation in teachers' perceptions of primary school principals' crisis management skills based on seniority. It is clear that there is a major advantage for school principals having 21 years of experience or more. This study concluded that teachers with 21 years of seniority or more are more engaged in and follow the subject of crisis management. In another study, Çakır & Çakır (2022) titled 'Views of School Administrators and Teachers on Crisis Situations and Crisis Management Skills', opposite results were found. It demonstrates that teachers do not believe that crisis management trainings provided by administrators are adequate in providing critical knowledge to school staff on crisis management. It is possible that some administrators do not view this situation as a priority.

The evaluation of the crisis management skills of primary school administrators showed that mathematics teachers had the highest scale scores. It was concluded that there was no significant difference between the opinions of school principals regarding crisis management skills in terms of the education level variable, since the mean rank values were close to each other. In another study titled "Crisis Management Skills of School Administrators in High Schools", it was seen that the skills they were most inadequate in were "organizing training on crisis management that would cover all employees (=2.86)", "preparing a written crisis management plan to protect from crises (=3.14)" and "providing students with definite information about the crisis experienced (=3.21)" (Çiçek Sağlam & Özsezer). Differences were observed between these skills. It is possible to say that this awareness may change in primary and high schools (Var & Zafer Güneş).

In another study titled "Examination of School Administrators' and Teachers' Experiences on Crisis Management During the Covid-19 Pandemic", "Participants expressed their opinions on the issues of uncertainty, decision-making, correspondence, different practices, staff shortage, caring about the crisis, being caught unprepared, and disruption of work". It is possible to say that this result is consistent with the data of our research. It is seen that the findings obtained are largely similar to the findings of other studies. This circumstance might be seen as indicating that school principals, who have significant roles in schools, prioritize their legal and administrative tasks in the event of the crisis.

Programs and plans regarding crises in schools should be prepared and implemented on a central and primary school basis with the participation of all stakeholders. Experts should provide seminars on how to make crisis management a priority for school principals and raise awareness. Primary school principals should be given models of crisis management skills and processes to follow, and weekly and monthly practices should be carried out and overseen.

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