

DECISION-MAKING OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS DURING COVID-19
PANDEMIC: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION

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PANDEMIC: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION**

submitted by **SELİN SARIHAN** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Science in Educational Sciences, Educational Administration and Planning, the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University** by,

Prof. Dr. Yaşar KONDAKÇI
Dean
Graduate School of Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. Hanife AKAR
Head of Department
Department of Educational Sciences

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gökçe GÖKALP
Supervisor
Department of Educational Sciences

Examining Committee Members:

Prof. Dr. Hanife AKAR (Head of the Examining Committee)
Middle East Technical University
Department of Educational Sciences

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gökçe GÖKALP (Supervisor)
Middle East Technical University
Department of Educational Sciences

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevinç GELMEZ BURAKGAZİ
Hacettepe University
Department of Educational Sciences

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last Name: Selin SARIHAN

Signature:

ABSTRACT

DECISION-MAKING OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION

SARIHAN, Selin

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Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gökçe GÖKALP

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The recent COVID-19 pandemic has caused a global-scale crisis at schools, leading to a huge disruption in educational activities. This study explores crisis perceptions and the decision-making process of the school principals, using the ongoing COVID-19 crisis as an example. The study is designed as a qualitative exploration with semi-structured interviews conducted with nineteen school principals in a district of Gaziantep province in Turkey. Data were analyzed through descriptive and content analysis. In the study, the majority of the principals defined crises as nonroutine and unexpected events; while when they are asked to exemplify crises, they gave the pandemic, school closures, natural disasters and interpersonal conflicts. To manage crises well, the principals emphasized the importance of precautions and financial power, crisis team and crisis planning. The principals stated that during the pandemic, their responsibilities increased while they had no or little compensation. Their decision-making is shown to be affected by bureaucracy, ambiguities in authority in decisions, time pressure, risks and experience. The results revealed that the principals are not knowledgeable about crisis management. Furthermore, there was not any on-purpose crisis desk or plan for the COVID-19 pandemic, while positive

examples of initiative among the principals can be seen. Bureaucracy is shown to have a positive effect for more experienced and inexperienced principals, while the rest emphasized the situational effects of bureaucracy, which sometimes cause inaction. The results revealed that the principals should be supported, trained and given more flexibility for effective crisis management, while the authorities should prepare themselves better.

Keywords: crisis management, COVID-19 Pandemic, school principals, crisis perception, crisis decision-making,

ÖZ

OKUL MÜDÜRLERİNİN COVID-19 PANDEMİSİNDE KARAR VERME SÜRECİNİN İNCELENMESİ: BİR NİTEL ARAŞTIRMA

SARIHAN, Selin

Yüksek Lisans, Eğitim Bilimleri, Eğitim Yönetimi ve Planlaması Bölümü

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Tüm dünyayı etkisi altına alan COVID-19 pandemisi, okullarda büyük bir krize ve eğitim öğretim etkinliklerinin kesintiye uğramasına sebep olmuştur. Bu çalışma okul yöneticilerinin kriz algıları ve okul yöneticilerinin kriz durumlarında karar verme süreçleri, devam eden COVID-19 krizi özelinde nitel araştırmadır. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme soruları ile Gaziantep ilinin bir ilçesindeki 19 okul müdürüyle görüşmeler yapılmış. Veriler betimsel analiz ve içerik analizi kullanılarak incelenmiştir. Okul müdürlerinin çoğu krizi, rutinin dışında ve beklenmeyen olay olarak tanımlamışlardır. Krizi örneklendirmeleri istendiğinde pandemi, okul kapanmaları, doğal afetler ve kişiler arası çatışmalar öne çıkan kriz örnekleri olmuştur. Bir krizin iyi yönetilmesi için, önlemlerin, finansal gücün, kriz takımının ve planlamanın olması gerektiği katılımcılar tarafından vurgulandı. Ayrıca, pandemi sürecinde okul müdürlerinin okul içi ve dışı sorumluluklarının arttığı ama bu sorumluluklar karşısında çok az ücret aldıkları veya hiç ücret almadıkları belirtilmiştir. Okul müdürlerinin karar verme süreçlerinin, bürokrasiden, üst otoritelerin muğlak kararlarından, zaman baskısından, risk faktörlerinden ve onların deneyimlerinden etkilendiği görülmüştür. Okul müdürlerinin kriz yönetimi hakkında yetersiz bilgisi

olduđu bulgusuna ulařılmıştır. Okul m¼d¼rlerinin uzaktan eđitimle ilgili inisiyatif kullandıkları olumlu ¼rnelere rađmen okullarda kriz planı ve kriz takımı farkındalıđı g¼r¼lmemektedir. B¼rokrasinin deneyimsiz ve ¼ok deneyimli m¼d¼rlerin kararları ¼zerinde olumlu etkisi olduđu, geri kalan okul m¼d¼rleri ise i¼inde bulunulan kriz durumu dahilinde b¼rokrasinin kararlarındaki olumlu ve olumsuz etkileri olabileceđini vurgulamışlardır. Bu ¼alıřmada olumlu ¼rnekleri verilen inisiyatif alma konusunda, okul m¼d¼rleri ¼st otoriteler tarafından desteklenmeli ve kriz y¼netimi ve karar verme konusunda hizmet i¼i ve hizmet ¼ncesi eđitimlerle desteklenmelidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: kriz y¼netimi, okul m¼d¼rleri, kriz algısı, kriz durumunda karar verme, COVID-19 pandemisi,

To my love...

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Crises have an essential role in the development and routine of an institution. Correct management of a crisis has a significant impact on preventing future crises. It is of utmost importance for educational administrators to have strong management and planning skills against crises for prevention (Ozalp & Levent, 2020). However, according to their institutional culture, every educational institution might have different perceptions and management perspectives on crises. Furthermore, environmental factors may cause differences between situations that can form a crisis. This means there might not be a uniform approach to crises suitable for all institutions. Thus, local school administrators need to plan for and manage crises effectively (Aksoy & Aksoy, 2003).

1.1. Background of the Study

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has caused a global-scale crisis at schools. UNESCO estimates show that the closure of schools in 188 countries has affected at least 1.5 billion students and 63 million teachers (Keles et al., 2020). The acute problems caused by the school closures, such as increased hygiene requirements, the lack of knowledge of teachers to use technology, lack of access to the internet and technological equipment for students, uncertainties, and the decrease in educational quality and motivation, strained educational administrators at all levels (Keles et al., 2020). These problems compelled school administrators to deal with the problems and decision-making, sometimes without guidance at the national or district level. Two recent studies that were done during COVID-19 in Turkey (Keles et al., 2020; Ozdogru, 2021) attracted attention to technological access problems in low socioeconomic classes, which the principals to be solved by the principals, and the

importance of clear communication with the students, parents, and teachers during COVID-19.

Kerr and King (2018) define a school crisis as a "temporary event or condition that affects a school, causing individuals to experience fear, helplessness, shock or horror. A school crisis requires extraordinary actions to restore a sense of psychological and physical security. The origin of the crisis need not be school-based; outside incidents and conditions also can create a crisis for the school (Kerr & King, 2018, Krauss, 1998; Seeger, 2002; Pearson & Clair, 1998; Simola, 2005; Liou 2014). Running a school daily involves a lot of uncertainty and complexity for a school principal (Liou, 2014). Thus, understanding crises in schools and examining the cycles require a dynamic point of view, borrowing from chaos and complexity theories (Liou, 2014; Liou, 2015).

Effective crisis management necessitates mitigation and prevention steps to predict and minimize future crises. Risk and safety assessments are essential and incredibly effective for crises happening over time (Grissom & Condon, 2021; James & Wooten, 2005). Furthermore, the school administrators should have an in-depth understanding of the school's constituents, especially students, families, colleagues, and the rest of the community (Grissom & Condon, 2021). However, preventing all crises is impossible, so an essential part of crisis management is the preparations. Effective crisis planning is required, including clearly defined responsibilities, logistics, training, and contingency plans (Kerr & King, 2008; Grissom & Condon, 2021). These plans should be accessible to both the school and district levels, while transparent communication systems for crisis response should be ready (James & Wooten 2005).

According to Fink's model (1986), during the acute crisis phase, the school administrators should immediately take responsibility to control the damage with quick and decisive actions (Bishop et al., 2015) based on farsighted thinking and available information. Transparent communication systems are employed at this phase and later (James & Wooten 2005). When the taken actions are in motion and the crisis is in the chronic phase, it is crucial to focus on recovery, which means returning to the school's regular operation. During recovery, the needs of the school constituents should be considered. Transparent communication and offering mental health resources against traumas are essential for the school to function again (Grissom &

Condon, 2021). Finally, it is vital to thoroughly assess the causes of the crisis and the strategies and plans employed to handle the crisis (Kerr & King, 2018).

School principals are responsible for crisis management at all stages. Forming the crisis management team, leading the preparation and execution of the crisis plans, coordinating with district-level or higher authorities, decision-making, and the responsibility of caring for the school's constituents are all among the duties of a school principal (Aksoy & Aksoy, 2003, Dos & Comert, 2012). Thus, a school principal needs to possess practical decision-making skills to conduct all these responsibilities in a short amount of time (Grissom & Condon, 2021).

Cognitive abilities determine decision-making under crisis, but emotions play a significant role (Sayegh et al., 2004). Decision-making theories are separated into two types, according to the role and place of the emotions in theory. Here, two of them are discussed. The first one is organized by Sweeny (2008), which considers emotions and perceptions as fundamental to the theory. On the other hand, the naturalistic decision-making theory (Klein, 1998) only considers the cognitive processes and emphasizes heuristics to make decisions and includes emotions as a specific heuristic.

According to Sweeny's (2008) theory, there are three stages for a person to decide under crisis. The first stage is assessing the information and severity of the factors causing the crisis and its consequences. The decision maker's perceptions are fundamental at this stage (Sweeny, 2008). At the second stage, the decision-maker determines the response options according to the feasibility and controllability of the responses and consequences. Finally, these options are evaluated according to the available resources and the direct and indirect consequences. During the determination and evaluation of the decision options, emotions affect the considerations indirectly (Sweeny, 2008).

Another decision-making model is called naturalistic decision-making (NDM), a cognitive-only theory (Klein, 1998; Lipshitz et al., 2001). It is developed to understand expert decisions and emphasizes heuristic decision models. In NDM, experts usually make decisions in the real-world according to familiarity and meaningfulness, based on the experience and instincts developed over time. All these happen under complex situations, vague aims, and lack of time (Dionne et al., 2018). In NDM, the emotions are included by the "risk-as-feelings hypothesis," where the emotions caused by the risk perception, called "affect heuristic," are used as

information during the cognitive decision-making processes (Loewenstein et al., 2001).

Turkey is one of the most centralized countries in the management of education. A study among OECD countries shows that 72.9% of the decisions about state secondary schools are taken by central administration. Only 8.3% of the decisions are taken at the school level (Korlu et al., 2021). This situation caused some issues during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Sudden decisions to open or close the schools countrywide hampered students' access to education at rural schools. The lack of information dissemination and not providing time to students, teachers, and administrators to be prepared for resuming and suspension of the education caused trust problems. It is thought that if decisions were taken by the local authorities according to the local pandemic situation and students' access to education, the education efforts would be affected less (Korlu et al., 2021).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

To delegate the decisions to the local administrators in an uncertain situation or a crisis, the local administrators should be competent to act against them. The competencies an administrator requires for crisis leadership are outlined in Grissom and Condon's (2021) article. These skills are good critical analysis and judgment of the situation, effective communication with parties involved, and emotional intelligence to control the stress levels and the team they lead to make healthy decisions. They should also have practical crisis management skills and know how to form an efficient plan.

On the other hand, the Turkish education system lacks coherent, formal training protocols for the employed administrators. Furthermore, crisis management and decision-making skills are not emphasized during the administrator selection process. It is expected for school administrators to learn on the job while they are not equipped with enough knowledge or authority to address a crisis (Cemaloglu, 2005; Akin, 2012). Under ambiguous situations, Bakioglu and Demiral (2013) showed that the principals point out the hasty planning of regulations, and sudden policy changes cause them to struggle. Furthermore, school principals tend to look at laws and regulations with experienced colleagues. This tendency leads to a strict response or

even inaction against events, which might not solve the problems of a complex and dynamic institution as a school (Bakioglu & Demiral, 2013).

The studies on the crisis management competencies of the principals in Turkey (Karakus & Inandi, 2018; Gezer, 2020; Ozalp & Levent, 2020; Keles et al., 2020) focus on their actions and leadership behavior. These studies highlight the importance of training principals for crisis management and their relative lack of competency during acute crises concerning pre- and post-crisis periods (Gezer, 2020; Karakus & Inandi, 2018). Also, it is pointed out that the perception of events that can be considered a crisis is limited to specific events like natural disasters, fire, and violence (Karakus & Inandi, 2018). However, there is a lack of available literature on the perception and decision-making process of school principals during crises.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

This study aims to understand the perception of crisis and the decision-making process of school principals under crisis. To achieve this, this study focuses on the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. First, the principals' definitions and perceptions of the crisis are analyzed based on their exemplifications. Then, the internal and external factors affecting their decision-making and approach to crises, including the role of central administration, are examined. Also, the role of principals during the pandemic is questioned to address the differences.

1.4. Research Questions

- How do school principals perceive crises?
- How do school principals make decisions under crisis, providing COVID-19 pandemic as an example?

1.5. Significance of the Study

Earlier studies examined the right approach for school crisis management and provided suggestions (Dos & Comert, 2012; Earthman, 2013). Most of the suggestions originate from general management studies, translated, and implemented for schools

by the administrations (Kerr & King, 2018; U.S. Department of Education [DoE], 2013). However, the commonality between earlier studies is that they are done at pre- or post-crisis periods and may not capture the actual process entirely due to issues of expression by the participants. On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic as a crisis example offers a considerable opportunity to analyze the decision-making process and crisis management approaches. Since COVID-19 is a long-term crisis that continues over one and a half years, the dynamic nature of the pandemic still causes new crises or the continuation of ongoing ones. For this reason, it is an opportunity to put a lens on crisis management processes over the long term.

Since the pandemic's beginning, there have been quantitative (Gezer, 2020; Ozalp & Levent, 2020) and qualitative (Keles et al., 2020) studies done on schools in Turkey to understand crisis management. These quantitative studies have focused on school principals' leadership competencies in crisis by asking their colleague teachers. These competencies are perceived by the surroundings. Considering that the pandemic emerged at the end of 2019, the literature on the pandemic and school management seems quite limited. In a dynamic crisis period such as the COVID-19 pandemic, it is considered especially important to investigate the crisis perception of school principals and how they make decisions in crises. Our study aims to explore the school principals' perception of crisis, decision-making in crisis, and crisis management processes directly via interviews and perceptions in the ongoing pandemic situation with other crises experienced in schools.

1.6. Definition of the Terms

Crisis: Sudden, uncontrollable, and highly adverse events that can potentially impact a whole community (Brock, 2002)

School crisis: Traumatic events involving school-related uncertainty, complexity, and urgency, independent of occurrence inside or outside of the school (Krauss, 1998; Seeger, 2002; Pearson & Clair, 1998; Simola, 2005; Liou, 2014)

Crisis Perception: Sights and beliefs of the school administrators whether the situation is a crisis or not.

Decision-making: Decision-making is the process that helps people choose between options (Klein, 2001)

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review focuses on the crisis in schools, decision-making processes in crisis, school principal training in Turkey, and crisis management. In this review, the definition of crisis and school crises, the causes, and the models of crises are presented. Crisis planning and management practices in schools and the school principals' role is examined. Then, the decision-making models are discussed alongside previous studies on the decision-making process under crisis. Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on the Turkish education system are presented, alongside a summary of how school administrators are trained and selected in Turkey.

2.1. School Crisis

A crisis is defined as sudden, uncontrollable, and highly negative events that can potentially impact a whole community (Brock, 2002). According to this definition, a crisis is exemplified by different illnesses and injuries, unexpected death, natural or caused disasters, and plagues. Another definition characterizes the crisis as a “low-probability, high-consequence event” that can threaten the fundamental goals of the organization (Weick, 1988). An additional definition points out the sequential nature of the crisis, which gathers volume and complexity with increasing speed over time and leads to a disordered state (Murphy, 1996). On the other hand, Coombs and Holladay (1996) specifically point out the possibility of reputational damage to the organization during the crisis. Rosenthal et al., (2001) emphasize the forced departure from the current state to uncertain futures caused by manifold forces interacting in unforeseen and disturbing ways.

Likewise, school crises have been described as traumatic events involving school-related uncertainty, complexity, and urgency, independent of occurrence inside

or outside of the school (Krauss, 1998; Seeger, 2002; Pearson & Clair, 1998; Simola, 2005; Liou 2014). According to the US Department of Education (2007), a school crisis is a situation where schools could not have enough information, may lack time and resources; but in which leaders must make one or many crucial decisions. For an event to be considered a crisis, there should be post-crisis stress, and traditional coping methods should not be effective (Erdur-Baker, 2014; Kerr & King, 2018). School crises can affect a wider community than the school's constituents, namely, the students and the employees and the parents, and various interest groups from education advocates to the whole society (Liou, 2009; Liou 2014).

2.1.1. The Causes of the Crises in Schools

The factors causing the school crisis can be divided into two groups: environmental and internal factors. Internal factors may stem from administrative staff, teachers, and students. Since schools are comprised of hundreds of students and their families, teachers, administrators, there might be great cultural and perceptual differences among them. It is impossible to ensure complete harmony, which makes crises inevitable (Türkünlü, 2006). The first crisis factor is the administration of the school, whose incompetencies may cause crises or make ongoing crises worse. The main reasons for these are adaptation problems to changes and the desire to preserve the status quo, lack of available resources and inefficient resource usage, crisis perception problems, and lack of initiative and leadership qualities that may prevent them from handling new types of crises effectively providing alternative ways. (Dos & Comert, 2012; Tüz, 2004). Especially, lack of initiative for the administrators and rigidity of the central administration above them may cause intensify the ongoing crises and affect the crisis response dramatically (Aksoy & Aksoy ,2003).

Secondly, as the class leader, the teachers may cause or prevent potential crises involving the students, parents, and colleagues. (Dos & Comert, 2012). The third constituent is the student body in the school. Students or different student groups may cause or be the focus of the crises originating from lethal and nonlethal usage of violence from minor fights to mass shootings, disobedience, drug usage, health issues and injuries, and suicidal behavior (Dos & Comert, 2012). Furthermore, the school staff responsible for the daily operation may cause crises due to mistakes or conflicts.

Overall, it can be said that interpersonal relationships among school constituents may cause a crisis (Aksoy & Aksoy, 2003).

On the contrary, families, economic factors, and natural disasters exemplify environmental factors (Dos & Comert, 2012). Families, who are increasingly involved in their children's education, put more pressure on schools and school administrators (Balci, 2000). This leads to conflicts between families and teachers, and administrators.

Externally, schools may face crises due to higher authorities' pressure and political and financial interest groups. The media might exacerbate these crises due to their effect on the general community. These factors may start crises and prolong the adverse effects of ongoing crises (Dos & Comert, 2012). Furthermore, lack of funding and any external donation for schools may cause a crisis. Inability to sustain daily school needs, security, and basic amenities for the school constituents may cause health or hazard issues, safety problems, and interruption of educational activities (Aksoy & Aksoy, 2003).

Natural disasters cause crises not just for the schools but also for the general community. Among the natural disasters, extreme meteorological events, floods, and avalanches, volcanic or tectonic activities, and accidents caused by humanity can be counted (Dos & Comert, 2012). COVID-19 pandemic may also be given as an example for natural-disaster-related crises. The main distinction of natural-disaster-related crises is that they are impossible to detect and predict when they can happen, which mandates continuous readiness (Dos & Comert, 2012). In addition to these reasons, another article also mentioned the crises that arise in line with current events such as violence, terrorism, wars, and war threat (Aksoy & Aksoy, 2003). Another source emphasizes racial conflict, community violence and homicide, and self-injurious behavior (Cornell & Sheras, 1998)

2.1.2. Types of Crises Experienced in Schools

According to the US Department of Education and State of Vermont (Vermont School Safety Center, 2021), the types of crises that require concrete response plans are active school shooting events, allergic reactions, assault and fighting in school, sexual harassment, terrorism events, and bomb threats, severe illness or injury that

requires first aid or CPR, fire and explosions, flooding, infectious diseases, epidemic and pandemics, hazardous material and chemical incidents, hostage situation on school grounds, intruders, kidnapping, missing students, motor vehicle accidents, power outages, school relocations, adverse severe natural and meteorological events, suicide attempts, and untimely death of a student or colleague.

Crises are not rare in the school environment, and terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and the loss of students or teachers can be examples of crises. (Adamson & Peacock, 2007; Cameron et al.,1995). In the qualitative research conducted with ten primary school principals and ten high school principals in Mersin, Turkey, in the 2006-2007 academic year, the most common crises that administrators encounter in their schools included substance abuse; attacks by gangs from outside the school; incidents of violence; instrumented attacks and floods (Inandi, 2008).

2.2. Crisis Management

To manage crises effectively, theories, models, and methods to understand the dynamic nature of the crisis are studied (Liou, 2014). Crisis management is a cycle that comprises all stages before, during, and after the crisis and the aspects of prevention, preparation, response, recovery, and learning (Wooten & James, 2008; Grissom & Condon, 2021). During pre-crisis, crisis management focuses on mitigation, prevention, and preparation efforts, while focusing on effective response to a crisis. During the post-crisis period, recovery and learning efforts are emphasized (Kerr & King, 2018; Grissom & Condon, 2021). However, it should be noted that the transitions between these stages might not be clear and show a concurrent or gradual change. Also, the management of sudden crises, which are unexpected and caused by an external, uncontrolled factor, and smoldering crises, are due to the accumulation of unsolved, smaller problems over time (James & Wooten, 2005). Sudden crises require an emphasis on preparedness and planning for the response, while smoldering crises require long-term mitigation and prevention strategies (Grissom & Condon, 2021).

2.2.1. Crisis Models

In this section, prominent crisis models relevant to this study are explained. The crisis models are separated into two groups according to the linearity of crisis progression (Liou, 2014). The classical view of crisis management assumes a linear cause and effect progression and is reductionist to simplify and understand the crisis (Wooten & James, 2008; Liou, 2014). Earlier studies use Fink's (1986) crisis life cycles to divide a crisis into linear phases (Boudreaux, 2005; Howell & Miller, 2006; Simola, 2005; Wooten & James, 2008; Liou, 2014). This approach considers crisis a linear phenomenon and reduces it as much as possible (Hart et al., 2001; Roux-Dufort, 2007; Shrivastava, 1995). Fink's (1986) model is divided into four linear stages. The first stage, the prodromal crisis stage, is the warning phase, in which the warnings may be hard to detect, or there are no precautions taken even though the warnings are well received. This is when crisis management approaches the target, where the prevention is more straightforward and cost-effective (Darling, 1994; Liou, 2014).

Consequently, the crisis develops, and the acute crisis stage starts when the damage is nearly inescapable. Here, the primary efforts go to damage assessment and control while the affected parties are alerted, generating a response. Then, the chronic crisis stage focuses on recovery, while successful crisis managers often use this stage for self-assessment and vulnerability analysis (Paraskevas, 2006). The crisis ends with the resolution stage, focusing on learning and identifying the new prodromes that can cause further crises (Mitroff, 2004).

Similarly, Mitroff's (2000) own model follows six phases: signal detection, probing, containment, recovery, no-fault learning, and redesign. The signal detection phase is where small but important clues for a crisis are seen. (Hutchins et al., 2008). If the organization fails to detect and respond to such clues, the organization may get damage in terms of reputation, money, or human life (Mitroff, 2005). The second phase includes preparation against a crisis, which are formal, written plans about the personnel, responsibilities, actions, and possibilities against every case. The crisis management team and crisis training for the personnel are subject to this phase (Mitroff, 2005). The containment phase focuses on limiting the damage of the crisis. Effective communication with the constituents and external agents is essential to successfully establish trust and handle the crisis with much-needed resources

(Hutchins et al., 2008). In the recovery phase, the prepared procedures to resume the activities and return the status quo are implemented, while the constituent people are checked to ensure physical and mental wellness. The final phases of no-fault learning and redesign focus on learning from mistakes and good practices to redesign the previous crisis management plans and practices. Critical analysis and feedback to improve the crisis response iteratively are important for future crises (Mitroff, 2000). Mitroff (2005) also recommends that organizations employ no-fault learning, which means not blaming anybody for the crisis or their actions during crises except criminal behavior and liability. According to him, the employed system should be the subject of the analysis.

On the contrary, a new model considers crises from a chaos and complexity theoretical perspective and assumes a crisis as a dynamic and organic phenomenon (McMillan, 2008; Liou, 2014). According to these concepts, educational institutions are considered complex systems (Liou, 2014) and should be evaluated accordingly. Novel approaches utilize chaos and complexity theories for crisis management but from different perspectives. Chaos theory focuses on identifying the complex patterns in organizational behaviors. Chaos theory challenges the linear causality relations and finds reductionist approaches, limited perspectives, and generalization inadequate (Kauffmann, 1995). Chaos theory points to a multidirectional causality where minor effects disproportionately impact. Nevertheless, general trends and broad patterns are still evident in a holistic manner and repeated over extended time frames (Seeger 2002).

Complementing the chaos theory, the complexity theory focuses on simplifying such patterns by recognizing the self-renewal mechanisms (Liou, 2014; Goldberg & Markoczy, 2000; Smith & Humphries, 2004). The five main concepts of this approach are listed as “nonlinearity, sensitivity to initial conditions, strange attractors, bifurcation point and feedback mechanism” (Liou, 2014). Nonlinearity indicates the unpredictability and lack of pattern of the events in an institution. This unpredictability is due to multiple interactions between small parties inside and outside the school (Finch, 2004, Seeger, 2002). Sensitivity to initial conditions emphasizes the effects of minuscule actions, which may cause system-scale consequences. Strange attractors point to the status quo that describes the institution’s state after a crisis (Seeger, 2002). The bifurcation point may break the ongoing order or help it stabilize

in a new manner for organizations, which is critical for developing institutions after a crisis (Seeger, 2002). Lastly, the feedback mechanism is vital for the organization to prevent future crises; however, there is still a chance that negative feedback may prevent further change in the system of the organization (Glass, 1996). Chaos theory suggests that the radical, chaotic disorders in the organizational system might be necessary to reach a higher level of order. Furthermore, the scope and timeframe these changes happen are consistent with organizational behavior and health (Seeger, 2002).

All complex organizations have the potential for bifurcation, especially when the system becomes more complex environmentally, interdependent, and thus prone to instability (Perrow, 1999). Chaos theory points out that a complete risk assessment is impossible for such organizations. When the organization consists of multi parties and groups of interest, a small effect from one of the constituents might create huge bifurcation events. Thus, chaos theory puts a big emphasis on crisis communication. Any disruptions in communication or minor errors with misleading messages might lead to an intensified crisis (Seeger, 2002). Challenging the established public communications principles, even though a prompt and definitive response is advised for an organization's reputation, the response may unfold as untrue or nonethical due to complex factors affecting the crisis (Coombs, 1999). Secondly, even a tiny variation in the usual communication system in terms of the content or media may have a more significant impact on crisis management (Sellnow et al., 2002). Furthermore, conventional crisis communication approaches focus on short-term aims of solving the crisis quickly and less damagingly. However, the chaos theory approach suggests a more comprehensive and broader approach for comprehensive crisis response (Seeger, 2002). The fundamentals of crisis management are discussed in this section. In the following section, crisis management in schools will be explained.

2.2.2. Crisis Management in K-12 Education

According to the guidelines prepared by the U.S. Department of Education in 2013, five interconnected phases are evaluated to build a model for school crisis management. Here, the prevention phase comprises the capabilities to prevent or deter a possible crisis such as a crime or mass casualty incidents (Kerr & King, 2018). The protection phase focuses on the acute responses against threats to parties such as

students and the school property. The mitigation phase is concerned with reducing possible life-threatening or property damage under emergencies. The response phase is the collection of all the capabilities to stabilize a crisis, whether it is imminent or ongoing, and targets safe and secure conduct of the status quo. Finally, the recovery phase means any capacity to assist the schools affected by a crisis and restore primary school functions (Kerr & King, 2018).

Figure 1

Phases of school crisis intervention, according to U.S Department of Education guidelines (U.S. DoE, 2013)



Based on U. S. Department of Education guidelines, these actions are suggested for an imminent or ongoing crisis. First, situational awareness must be ensured based on either supervision or surveillance facts. A risk assessment should be done according to this information. Risk assessment should examine 1) the safety and preparedness of physical facilities of the school. 2) the school culture and climate to learn about problematic thoughts and behaviors without compromising privacy. 3) the internal and external threat assessment within laws. 4) capacity and resources of the responsible parties against a crisis. This may involve identifying people with specific

skills (first-aid, search and rescue, counseling, functional skills) and inventorying all the supplies and equipment.

Then, a team should be assembled which is responsible for crisis management. This team will be responsible for collecting the facts, communicating with required agencies and first responders, and managing the response prioritizing the well-being of the school's parties. A good team should be receptive to each member's thoughts and needs. After the crisis, the team should continue the work, especially to evaluate damages and prevent a secondary reaction caused by post-traumatic stress. Furthermore, the role of higher authorities such as district administration is significant to ensure meritocratic leadership against crises, identifying and providing the resources, preparing and distributing the procedures and plans, and practicing these plans and strategies with the constituents periodically (Kerr & King, 2018; US. DoE 2013b). Among the other suggestions, setting up contacts and involving the district authorities for health and security, having a clear division of actions, conceiving potential scenarios and decision points, and having them written and reachable is essential.

2.2.3. Crisis Planning

Planning against crises has been widespread and mandatory in recent years, especially in the United States, due to the chronic threats against school welfare (Kerr & King, 2018). It is mandated that federally funded schools provide crisis training (Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, 2016). During crisis planning, the goals should be well-identified by the leadership team. The objectives given below by Kerr and King (2018) are very comprehensive and hold for K-12 education.

- An effective plan should be present to reestablish the safety and needs of students, employees, and families.
- Reunifying students with their families should be the most urgent since concerned parents may complicate the crisis and jeopardize management efforts.
- A clear communication plan should prevent disinformation and placate the involved parties.
- Returning to routine should be the ultimate goal.

- After-crisis support should be planned and ready at disposal, whether psychological or physical.
- Identification of possible traumatized and at-risk people affected by the crisis should be made to support everybody.
- Effective crisis response strategies should be laid down, including prevention and risk assessment, to prevent future incidents before they are costly.
- The mental health of the crisis response team should always be taken into account for a crisis plan, whose reactions against stress and burnout would hamper the response against the ongoing crisis. Backup and rotation plans should be prepared to lift off a part of the burden on the responders.

Good crisis planning should always include a periodic assessment and feedback mechanism which prevents outdated plans against the dynamic environment. The crisis plans should be unique and tailored because general guidelines and borrowed plan documents do not always reflect the school's best interests (Hutchins et al., 2008; Kerr & King, 2018). The plan should consider any emergency, threats, and hazards before a crisis, inside or outside the school, such as natural disasters, homicides, financial crises, and student wellbeing. Not just any situation, accessibility, and inclusion should be considered during the planning process for the whole school community. Furthermore, the prepared plans should always be supported by the leadership, at least at the district level, to be effective and make planning easier (Kerr & King, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2013b).

2.2.4. Role of School Administration in Crisis

In crises due to expected and unexpected risk situations, it is expected from schools that there should be an effective and sufficient intervention to reduce any harm to all stakeholders. Satisfying this expectation depends on the capability of schools to intervene in crises with a planned and well-trained team (Aksoy & Aksoy, 2003). Crisis teams are an essential part of crisis management in schools. Schools should have well-trained and well-organized crisis teams dedicated to making the school more secure to manage the crisis. (Poland,1994). However, the school principal is mainly responsible for crisis management. The school principal must determine methods to

solve the crisis to minimize the harms of the crisis. The role of the school principals in the crisis is foresight and creating solutions to crisis management. (Dos & Comert, 2012).

Disasters also are crises. Schools have two roles in disaster situations. The record in the immediate aftermath of the disaster is to provide shelter to the victims, and its role in the post-disaster period is the continuity of education activities. (Afet ve Acil Durum Hizmetleri Yonetmeligi, 2013). In the research carried out after the crisis that occurred due to the August 17th and November 12th earthquakes in Turkey, it is suggested that school managers should have competence in crisis management.

Competence in crisis management requires a set of skills for school principals (Grissom & Condon, 2021). A school principal needs three sets of skills for effective crisis management (Grissom & Condon, 2021). First, the required skill is effective analysis and judgment of the available information and the risk. The principals should anticipate the effectiveness of available crisis management plans to make the best decision (Bishop et al., 2015).

The second required skill is effective communication. In effective communication, what and how the message is conveyed is essential. The medium of communication, such as mass phone and text systems, email lists, websites, or social media, should be prepared beforehand and reach all the necessary parties as wide as possible (Gainey, 2009). Furthermore, the communication system should enable two-way communication to collect information and the needs of the necessary parties for effective decision-making (Grissom & Condon, 2021). The communication content should be specific to the particular crisis but always be transparent and as frequent as needed. Also, the communication should be consistent at different times and preferably come from a single spokesperson. All these factors are needed to establish trust, credibility, and a sense of control to the necessary parties.

The third skill is emotional intelligence. Recognizing and managing the emotions of self and the surrounding people is very important for the successful management of a crisis. The principals must be resilient under stress brought by the crisis since the stress negatively affects the decision-making process. Also, emotional intelligence will help mobilize the constituents for crisis response (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020).

The school principals are responsible for the motivation of the colleagues for effective crisis response. The Participatory Management Model focuses on the structure of the organization to achieve high motivation. This model states that when the organization is established according to employee needs, it leads to high productivity (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2021). Furthermore, McGregor (1960) focuses on the fact that most managerial action results from managers' assumptions about their subordinates. These contrasting sets of assumptions are explained with Theory X and Y. Theory X assumes that people dislike work, so they must be coerced, controlled, directed, and threatened. In contrast, Theory Y assumes that commitment to aims is a function of rewards for achievement, and people accept and seek responsibility under the right conditions (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2021).

2.3. Decision-making in Crises

A decision can be described as a solution or situation against a problem and requires several steps to achieve a correct decision (Al Dabbagh, 2020). These steps start with a clear definition of the problem, then the collection of the necessary information, and classification to achieve the optimal solution. However, these steps can get disturbed during a crisis. Decision-making during a crisis often requires a fast solution, while the decision should not be a random, unfounded solution. Thus, the effectiveness and ingenuity of a decision-maker are of utmost importance (Youssef, 2017). Schippers and Rus (2021) points out in the context of COVID-19 the importance of reflexive decision-making in an ever-changing situation. Reflexive decision-making decreases the information-processing errors by continuous evaluation and presents a balanced approach to the problem.

Decision-making during a crisis cannot be taught due to inherent uncertainties. Mistakes can happen; however, it is always better than indecisiveness under a crisis. The decision does not have to be correct or mistaken but between alternative methods. Thus, the decisions taken during a crisis should also be closely followed and be open to changes and adjustments (Al Dabbagh, 2020). Previous studies emphasize collecting and classifying information for healthy decision-making, which increases the odds of a successful decision (Schippers et al., 2014). Also, it is reported that internal biases of the decision-maker may lead to mistakes (Schippers & Rus, 2021).

It is shown that, under high stress, decision-makers are more likely to decide based on their habits and familiarity with the options. Other biases include framing and escalation of commitments (Schipper et al., 2014). The scale of such mistakes may increase further if the decisions are made as a team, including team-level biases (Schipper & Rus, 2021).

Scholars have organized theories to understand the process of correct decision-making (Dionne et al., 2018). These theories differ among themselves according to the role of emotions in decision-making. Recent studies suggest that cognitive and emotional information processing models work together (Sayegh et al., 2004). This thought led to the crisis decision theory organized by Sweeny (2008).

Sweeny's (2008) theory combines coping theory with decision-making theory to predict possible decision outcomes done by the individual under different crises (Dionne et al., 2018). Sweeny discusses three stages of the decision-making process under crisis. At the first stage, the decision-maker uses the information about causes, consequences, and comparative information to understand the severity of the event. The decision maker's perceptions are extremely important for the response during the assessment. The second stage involves decreasing the number of possible responses according to the severity of the event, feasibility and resources, and the controllability of the responses (Sweeny, 2008). Here, decision-makers might be influenced by their perception of the control under negative emotions and the available resources. In the final stage, the consequences of the decisions are scrutinized according to their effectiveness to solve the crisis, emotional and reputational impact, and spillovers to other areas in life (Dionne et al., 2018).

On the other hand, naturalistic decision-making theory (NDM) only focused on the cognitional processes and was devised to explain how the experts make their decisions differently under crises (Klein, 1998; Lipshitz et al., 2001; Loewenstein et al., 2001). NDM offers a practical approach to decision-making and focuses on the real-world contexts meaningful to the decision-maker (Lipshitz et al., 2001). According to NDM, the decisions are made by heuristics using instincts and experience instead of rational approaches (Lipshitz et al., 2001). In the NDM, the decision options are selected according to their compatibility with the ongoing crisis and the decision maker's values (Klein, 1998; Dionne et al., 2018). Also, the familiar patterns, informal reasoning, and decision-maker standards are used to select

appropriate responses instead of comparing each option and deciding the best (Beach, 1990).

Experience is an essential factor in NDM theory, which is context-specific. Also, the expert focuses on the likelihood and feasibility during decision-making (Lipshitz et al., 2001). Still, emotions play a role in risk situations, which found their way into the NDM as a risk-as-feelings heuristic (Loewenstein et al., 2001). The Risk-as-feelings heuristic is the instinctive reaction against the risky situation, and the emotion aroused by the crisis is used as information to make decisions. Using risk-as-feelings heuristic leads to a quicker decision and more common options. According to NDM, negative emotions under crisis create quick action tendencies among the decision-makers. Here particular emotions, anger, regret, guilt, fear, disappointment, and shame, lead to different feelings of control. It creates a drive to engage in anger, regret, and guilt feelings or to withdraw under disappointment and shame when encountered with a crisis. Examining these emotions provides an idea about the actions of experts under crisis according to NDM (Loewenstein et al., 2001; Dionne et al., 2018).

2.3.1. Studies on Decision-making in Crisis in K-12 Schools

There are a smaller number of studies in the databases of Google Scholar and Web of Science focusing on decision making and crisis management in K-12 schools, mostly translated from general organizational studies to the best of our knowledge. The main theme among these studies is either they focus on the principals' actions to compare with previous organizational studies or their leadership qualities. Another theme of the study is using external perceptions such as teachers about their principal's crisis management skills.

A case study in a school system in Virginia explores the decision-making process after a catastrophic snowstorm that collapsed the roof of the gymnasium, leaving high-school students outside of the education system (Earthman, 2013). The study points out the importance of an expedient decision on the planning. The decisions should be followed, and actions should be supervised. Also, while making decisions, the administrators should consider the educational feasibility and student well-being as a factor. Furthermore, the effects of community and political

involvement in the situation should be considered since external parties may not know the full extent of the situation and have different considerations. Thus the school administrators should still show their control over the crisis (Earthman, 2013).

Mutch (2015) investigates the dispositional, relational, and contextual factors influencing school principals' actions during disasters. She focused on a recent earthquake in New Zealand as the background of the study. Twenty-five interviews are done from a purposive sampling according to the earthquake experience profile. The data is collected 12-24 months after the disaster happened. She highlighted that the successful principals in crises are the ones who utilize their dispositional qualities and experiences, alongside their relational skills and the community sense they built over time while meeting the situational needs well-thought but in a flexible way. The calm and decisive manner in their actions increased the trust, while they continued constant analysis and information collecting about the ongoing crisis. She points out that the interviewed principals had enough time to collect and think over all the available information to assure the wellness of the constituents and to make long-term plans. The principals were flexible to address the care needs with the school routine after the crisis.

In a recent study in Turkey, Ozalp and Levent (2020) used quantitative methods to measure the crisis management skills of school principals. Three hundred thirty-one teachers in the Eyupsultan and Pendik districts of Istanbul participated in assessing their perceptions of the crisis management skills of their school principals. It is shown that the principals' crisis management skill perceptions do not change much according to gender, education level, or the career stages of the participants. However, it is shown that these perceptions change according to the level of the school, whether it is elementary, secondary, or high school. Finally, an improvement in the perception is observed for the pre-crisis period behavior of principals when the duration of coworking with the principal increases.

A thesis study conducted by Kells (2021) uses critical race theory to explore educational administrators' decision-making experiences in crises using the COVID-19 pandemic. She conducts a phenomenological analysis, focusing on the effects of race, racism, and power relations. She uses criterion-based sampling in a large California school district. The key themes were the communication within the school and with the public, impact on instruction and school facilitation, leading in

uncertainty, systems supporting decisions, and role of equity in these decisions. She pointed out the inequities in the communication and fulfillment of needs of people of color and the fact that equity and cultural relevance of the decisions are now a contributing factor.

Grissom and Condon (2021) studied the school closures during pandemics and examined the crisis management approaches during this period in U.S. public schools. It is shown that there was a lack of comprehensive distance learning plans in most of the districts, but it is mitigated to an extent during the first month with quick action. The main problems were accessibility to home computers and devices and the internet during this period. Furthermore, most teachers lacked the training to use remote learning tools. During the first month of the closure, some school districts quickly focused on the basic needs, such as food deliveries to students' homes, which was previously given at school. Some schools in Tennessee addressed technological issues by providing devices and internet hot spots to increase accessibility. The study stresses the importance of institutional support to educational administration to provide the resources they need. It is suggested that district authorities get external help for crisis management and decision-making training if they are absent. Also, the school leaders are urged to have regular risk assessment plans to increase readiness. It is also stressed that COVID-19 provides an opportunity to raise awareness among educational administrators to have a systematic approach against crises and crisis preparedness.

A study conducted by Bakioglu and Demiral (2013) in various schools in Istanbul province, Turkey, explored school principals' perception and decision-making processes under ambiguous situations. They conducted interviews with thirty principals and qualitatively analyzed the results. They showed the planning errors, instabilities, legislative problems are the main ambiguity sources perceived by the principals. Under such situations, the principals commonly indicated that they often resort to available rules and regulations and then discuss and consult with colleagues in and outside the school, i.e., teachers and principals, to find exemplary situations. The study pointed out the lack of initiative and occasional inaction of the principals.

Keles et al. (2020) examined the educational leadership behaviors of school principals during COVID-19 in Turkey. She applied a semi-structured interview technique for a qualitative study. The interviewees were selected among the school

principals of public schools with at least three years of experience. Maximum variation sampling is applied by selecting fourteen interviewees from different provinces, gender, seniority level, and school types. The interviews pointed out that the lack of technological equipment and internet access, especially in the Eastern Anatolia region, affected access to education among low socio-economic classes. Furthermore, low motivation among students is an essential problem for student success. It is shown that the school principals acted to solve these problems directly within their capacity. At the same time, they stressed the importance of clear and effective communication with students, parents, and the teacher. The principals also suggested the importance of teaching digital education skills to students and teaching and using technology in routine education. Finally, the principals suggested the importance of developing effective coping skills against stress.

Ozdogru (2021) conducted a study in Eskisehir province, Turkey, with seventeen school principals in 2021 January and February. He used maximal variation sampling among purposive sampling methods. He qualitatively investigated the problems principals faced during the COVID-19 pandemic and their coping and problem-solving strategies based on their experiences. The responses indicate various results themes, including administrative, communicational, financing, planning, personnel-related, school climate and culture, health and wellness, and educational problems. The principals indicated that they employed administrative and personal strategies to cope with these problems. One of the main issues raised by the principals is the misunderstanding and communication problems with parents and the students due to the lack of in-person communication. He suggested actions against the lack of an action plan against crises that the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) should implement.

2.4. School Administration in Turkey

At the dawn of the Republic period, the Unification Law (Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu, 1924) was passed on March 3rd, 1924 to create a national education system unified in practices. Per the law, the schools operating under different names and using different teaching approaches were combined under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education. The MoNE reorganized its central and rural organizations along

with this law (Balci, 2008). A pedagogy department in Gazi Education Institute was founded to train teachers, principals, and inspectors according to the needs of newly founded or transformed educational institutions. To enroll in the pedagogy department, the MoNE required at least one year of classroom teaching experience. When the courses in the institute program are examined, the field courses consist of 40%, vocational courses 20%, and culture courses 40% (Duman,1988).

In the 19th National Education Council, the general assembly made some recommendations about increasing the quality of education administrators. The prepared "Selection Criteria for Educational Administrator Candidates" focuses more on experience, success in written exams, and training (MoNE Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu Başkanlığı, 2014). In Turkey, principal selection exams for educational institutions (EKYS) are prepared by the Student Selection and Placement Center (OSYM). EKYS 2021 consisted of 80 multiple choice questions related to general culture (20%), Ataturk's principles and reforms (10%), values education (10%), ethics in education and instruction (10%), educational sciences (30%), and legislations (20%). (MoNE Eğitim Kurumlarına Yönetici Seçme Sınavı Kılavuzu, 2021)

The duties of school principals in the Preschool and Primary Education Institution are listed in the 39th article of the Ministry of National Education Pre-School Education and Primary Education Institutions Regulations. (MoNE Okul Öncesi Eğitim Ve İlköğretim Kurumları Yönetmeliği, 2014). School Manager; students, all kinds of education and training, management, personnel, accrual, movable property, correspondence, educational and social activities, boarding, scholarship, bussed education, security, nutrition, care, protection, shift, order, hygiene, public relations and so on. It ensures the fulfillment of the duties assigned by the Ministry and provincial / district national education directorates and other duties specified in the job description. In addition to lecturing, the school principal is entitled to carry out his responsibilities under the law, regulation, tariff, directive, program, and orders, to organize and supervise the school. The school principal is responsible for school management, evaluation, and development following its objectives (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığına Bağlı Kurumlarına Yönetici Seçme ve Görevlendirme Yönetmeliği, 2021).

2.4.1. Training of School Administrators in Turkey

The first mention of the training of school administrators in Turkish education history goes back to the Research Report of the Central Government in 1962, alongside the 7th National Education Council, where an emphasis is given to educational administration as a separate topic. The first school opened at the undergraduate level is Ankara University Faculty of Education which started education in the 1965-1966 academic year, providing four-year education in this field for the first time. The faculty included Educational Administration and Inspection and Education Economy and Planning majors. Ankara University is followed by Gazi, Hacettepe, Istanbul, and September 9th Universities to fill the need for experienced and trained staff fulfilling administration and inspection duties (Cemaloglu, 2005). However, these undergraduate-level majors are closed according to the Council of Higher Education's November 6th, 1997 dated decision (Yükseköğretim Kurulu, 1997). Meanwhile, having a graduate education in educational administration was only a reason for preference, not a requirement to be a school administrator during this period (Akin, 2012). The 14th National Education Council emphasizes that it is sufficient to have a teachership experience to be an educational administrator. The teachers already employed can fill the school principal role (Milli Egitim Bakanligina Bagli Kurum Yoneticilerinin Atama Yonetmeligi 1993, Sisman and Turan, 2004).

In 1998, the Ministry of National Education started implementing a two-phase exam with 120-hours training in school administration. However, it was not focused on high-level administrators and their education at the district or national level (Akin, 2012). These examinations are changed over time and have not been implemented during some periods. It can be said that there is less emphasis on regulated training for administrators, while it is expected for the administrators to learn on the job (Akin 2012; Cemaloglu 2005). The latest regulations have listed the requirements for an administrator role as below (Milli Egitim Bakanligina Bagli Kurumlarina Yoneticisi Secme ve Gorevlendirme Yonetmeligi, 2021).

- Being graduated from higher education programs
- Working as a teacher under the Ministry

- Completing the Educational Administration Certification program (organized by the Ministry)
- Being successful in the corresponding examinations (written and interview-based)
- Qualified for teaching in the institution to be assigned as an administrator
- No suspension or dismissal due to a judicial or executive investigation
- For principal role, it is asked to have one-year experience at equal or lower-level administrative positions

Table 2.1

Content of Exams Used to Select and Appoint Educational Administrators in Turkey (Milli Egitim Bakanligina Bagli Kurumlarina Yonetici Secme ve Gorevlendirme Yonetmeligi, 2021)

Topics	% Content
Written Exam	
General knowledge	20
Principles of Ataturk and history of revolution	10
Values education	10
Ethics in education	10
Educational sciences	30
Laws and regulations	20
Interview	
Written exam content	20
Comprehension and expression of topics and ideas	20
Merit and representability	20
Self-confidence and persuasion	20
Openness to technological innovations	20

The Ministry of National Education also organizes various post-appointment seminars and training programs, but their coverage and quality are nonstandard (Akin, 2012). The exam content for the selection is given in Table 2.1 (Milli Egitim Bakanligina Bagli Kurumlarina Yonetici Secme ve Gorevlendirme Yonetmeligi, 2021). The weight of educational science knowledge is low, while there is no explicit

attribution to the crisis management and leadership skills and the knowledge in both written and interview exams.

2.5. COVID-19 in Turkey and its Impact on Turkish education

On December 31st, 2019, the WHO China Country Office was informed of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause detected in Wuhan. The disease, named COVID-19, spread to many countries briefly. On March 11th, 2020, COVID-19 was reported as a pandemic by WHO. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant loss of human life globally, and public health, food systems, and the world of work have become much harder. The economic and social disruption because of the pandemic is overwhelming. Millions of people have faced extreme poverty and undernourishment (World Health Organization, 2021). COVID-19 crisis affected our world in many ways. Countries have implemented various practices to slow the spread of the coronavirus, from national quarantines to school closures. The Minister of Health announced the first coronavirus case in Turkey on March 11th, 2020 (TEDMEM, 2020). On March 13th, 2020, it is announced that primary, secondary and high schools were on holiday for one week as of March 16th. After March 23rd, 2020, it was announced that distance education would be started and continued until the end of the year over the internet and TV channels (TEDMEM, 2020). The modified calendar for the 2020-2021 academic year was announced in mid-July. However, in-person education could not start until September 21st for pre-K12 and 1st graders. The in-person education is extended to 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 8th grades and newcomers and senior high-schoolers on October 12th. The exception was the schools in rural areas and villages due to problems of remote education in these schools. Due to the second peak of COVID-19 cases, in-person education was suspended until the next semester on November 18th, 2020. The mid-semester break is postponed and combined with semester break. The second semester has also started remotely. In-person education has returned on March 2nd according to the risk level, 2021 but was suspended again at the end of April due to the full closure throughout Turkey (Korlu et al., 2021). During the COVID-19 period, the school administrators and some teachers are assigned to filiation teams to track COVID-19 spread and social assistance groups of the districts to help senior and affected people.

During the pandemic, one of the issues raised was the quick changes and last-minute decisions for school closures and COVID-19 precautions, which affected the teachers, students, and parents greatly, and lack of information and communications (Korlu et al., 2021). In their latest report, Educational Reform Initiative (ERG) stated that the COVID-19 pandemic surfaced the inconsistencies in different general policy documents and decisions. It is reported that long-term policy plans had to be changed frequently under the pandemic crisis (Korlu et al., 2021). The focus group studies done by ERG highlighted the hardships faced by school administrators and teachers. It is stated that the frequent changes and ambiguities in the decisions of the Ministry without informing schools made necessary preparations nearly impossible and caused a loss in the trust between parents and the school. Also, the technical issues regarding online education made class management harder and limited the participation of the disadvantaged students, increased workload on school administration and the teachers are raised as other concerns in the report (Korlu et al., 2021). Furthermore, the pandemic precautions affected the grading, and student evaluation, where some exams are canceled or the span of topics has been limited, and some exams became optional. The report identifies this situation as a concern for student motivation and their perception of fairness and trust (Korlu et al., 2021).

2.6. Summary

This review was prepared between May 2019 and August 2021, using databases of Web of Science, Google Scholar, Science Direct, and EBSCOHost. This review focused on the phenomenon of crisis and the crisis management and decision-making practices relevant to the study. A crisis is defined as sudden, uncontrollable, and unexpected events with widespread effects and high consequences (Brock, 2002). Specifically, school crises are situations that do not just affect the students, teachers, and administration. They may have effects on a variety of stakeholders ranging from employees to parents to education advocates, political authorities, and even on society (Liou, 2009; Liou 2014). Thus, it is of utmost importance for schools to have effective mechanisms for crisis management in schools.

The common causes for school crises can be internal factors arising from students, teachers, or administrators, such as incompetencies, lack of initiative and

leadership in school, cultural differences and interpersonal relationships, and issues from varying student bodies (Aksoy & Aksoy, 2003). Furthermore, external causes might play a big role in school crises. The pressure of higher authorities, political or financial interest groups, or media may start or exacerbate crises. Also, funding issues and the inability to sustain daily school needs may lead to crises. Finally, natural disasters as a cause of crisis are distinctive since they are impossible to detect and predict, and people must always be ready for them (Dos & Comert, 2012). COVID-19 pandemic is the most recent example of such a crisis. Managing such crises is often considered as a cycle, including prevention, preparation, response, recovery, and learning phases (Wooten & James, 2008; Grissom & Condon, 2021).

In order to predict crisis progression, models are proposed by various researchers. The first group of research assumes the crisis cycle as a linearly progressing phenomenon (Fink, 1986; Mitroff, 2000). In this model, the crises are commonly divided into the first stage where warnings of the crisis can be seen, where the preparation should be done and less costly, which is known as the prodromal stage or signal detection and probing. The second stage, the acute crisis stage, is where damage assessment and containment efforts are essential, leading to the chronic crisis and resolution stages, where recovery, analysis, and learning occur (Mitroff, 2005). An alternative model analyses crises from a chaos and complexity theoretical perspective, where linear progression is inadequate to explain organizations like schools where various constituents interact and conflict (Liou, 2014). This model explains crises according to their nonlinearity, susceptibility to initial conditions, and effects of minor disturbances in the crisis. In this study, the complexity-theoretic view is assumed to be the valid point of view.

According to the U.S. Department of Education guidelines, crisis management phases are divided into prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery phases (Kerr & King, 2018). An effective crisis management strategy necessitates situational awareness about the crisis, crisis team building, and meritocratic division of responsibility. The responsibilities of the team are plan and procedure preparation and rehearsals, effective communication with external parties, damage assessment, and recovery efforts. Planning is vital against all possible crisis conditions and listing the responsibilities above. There should be a safety plan that prioritizes students, and these plans should be updated periodically (Kerr & King, 2018; U.S. DoE 2013b).

Decision-making is another important prong of crisis management. During crises, a fast and effective solution is desired. A crisis is prone to uncertainties, and an effective decision-making mechanism is needed. For this purpose, some theories differ among themselves according to the role of emotions in decision-making (Schippers & Rus, 2021). One view combines coping theory with decision-making methods under three stages: information collection, decreasing the number of possible responses according to criteria like feasibility, and analysis of selected responses in terms of effectiveness against crises (Dionne et al., 2018). A second view, naturalistic decision-making theory, focuses only on cognitive processes. This theory (NDM) considers emotions as information (Lipshitz et al., 2001). According to NDM, decisions are made by heuristics, instincts, and experience. They are selected according to their compatibility with the ongoing crisis and values of the decision-maker; thus, the decisions do not have to be the best (Klein, 1998).

For all these efforts, the role of school administration, especially principals, is vital. The principals are responsible for all the planning and prevention activities, crisis team forming, and management and mitigation of the crisis. Thus, the principals should possess some skills for competent crisis management. These are effective analysis and decision-making capabilities, effective communication, and emotional intelligence (Grissom & Condon, 2021). These competencies require a vital training requirement. In Turkey, principal education is performed by the Ministry of National Education. Over history, it can be seen that crisis management education is underemphasized, and it is expected for administrators to learn on the job.

So far, only a few serious studies in the literature have focused on crisis management and decision-making in crises in schools in Turkey, to the best of our knowledge. Recent examples include a study in Istanbul where thirty principals were interviewed for a qualitative analysis of their perception and decision-making processes under ambiguous situations, which showed the lack of initiative and inaction due to planning and legislative problems (Bakioglu & Demiral, 2013). A similar study in Istanbul asked teachers about their perceptions of the crisis management skills of their principals at different stages of crisis (Ozalp & Levent, 2020). This study showed that the trust of teachers in their principals regarding crisis management increases depending on coworking duration and the level of the school. During the COVID-19 pandemic, studies examining the leadership behaviors and the practical problems

encountered by the principals are investigated. Keles et al. (2020) showed that the main problems are lack of technological equipment and internet access and low motivation among students. Overall, the principals emphasized the importance of effective crisis communication, teaching digital education skills, and developing effective coping strategies. Ozdogru (2021) confirmed these findings one year earlier and criticized the lack of an action plan prepared by the Ministry of National Education. This lack of a plan is shown as the cause of main communication problems with parents and the students. Also, the principals in this study stated they did what they could do against the administrative, communicational, financing, planning, personnel-related, school climate and culture, health and wellness, and educational problems during the pandemic.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has created a significant loss of human life (World Health Organization, 2021). As a result of pandemic precautions, schools have been closed multiple times alongside national quarantines, while remote education and appropriate in-school accommodations had to be prepared (Korlu et al., 2021). Thus, this situation possesses a considerable opportunity to study the actions and perceptions of school administrations to crises in-crisis. In Turkey, it has been reported that the pandemic revealed inconsistent policies and decisions in schools and national education (Korlu et al., 2021). The frequent changes and communication problems caused hardships for school administration, making preparations impossible for the sudden changes and decreasing the trust between parents and the schools. Furthermore, the socioeconomic disparities and lack of infrastructure for remote education made class management harder and decreased student participation and performance (Korlu et al., 2021). In the face of these hardships, it is essential to study the readiness and perception of school principals to prepare Turkish education against future crises better. This study aims to explore school principals' decision-making process and crisis perceptions, readiness, and hardships they faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

This chapter enlightens on information about the design of the study, the rationale of the research design, background information, selection of the participants, demographics of the participants, sources of data, data analysis, and trustworthiness.

3.1. Design of the Study

This study was designed as qualitative exploratory research. In social sciences, exploration is a broad-ranging, purposive, systematic, prearranged undertaking designed to maximize the discovery of generalizations leading to description and understanding of an area of social or psychological life (Stebbins, 2001). Creswell and Creswell (2017) describe qualitative research as an approach to exploring and interpreting information regarding a human life issue collected from people via literature-based questions related to the topic. Moreover, they state that researchers use those pieces of information to make inferences and form more general themes.

Besides categorizing research methods as qualitative and quantitative, there is another classification for research design as descriptive, causal, and exploratory research. Qualitative research is exploratory since there is usually not much information about the topic in the literature. There is a need for clarification to enlighten underlying mechanisms of behavior, attitudes, thoughts, or any other phenomena (Taylor et al., 2015). There are different kinds of theories and methodologies used in qualitative exploratory designs that researchers base their topic of interest on, and also, data collection strategies show variety. Interviews, focus groups, case studies, and fieldwork commonly use data collection strategies in qualitative research. These data can be processed by different analyses such as content

analysis, conversation analysis, narrative analysis, and ethnography (Jackson et al., 2007).

This study is designed as qualitative exploratory research since it aims to understand how the school principals perceive crisis and how they make their decisions during a crisis, focusing on the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The participants of this study were the school principals that worked in one of the districts of Gaziantep. School administrators in this district faced many educational or non-educational crises in the past. The district has a border with Syria, and after the Syrian civil war, many Syrian people migrated to Gaziantep. One of the Temporary Education Centers for Syrian Children was founded in this district. There are not only problems arising from Syrian students but also the socio-economic structure of the region. Agriculture and livestock are the primary sources of income there. Education is not considered important enough. This research topic is understudied in Turkey. Since school principals in Gaziantep are likely to face a crisis because of the reasons above, it is essential to understand their decision-making mechanisms and attitudes towards the crisis. It is thought that investigating this topic via qualitative exploratory research design would be more suitable, beneficial, and informative since there is limited research and information concerning school principals and their decision-making attitudes in Turkey. In addition to that, under extreme circumstances, such as a pandemic, different underlying factors would affect the decision-making process. Uncertainty of pandemic, concern for people's health, and immediate need to take action are some of these factors that play a role in making decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic (Al-Dabbagh, 2020). It is expected that this study can also reveal difficulties school principals face when taking action and making decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Gaziantep is a complex city hosting both different socioeconomic classes and ethnic populations. Therefore, understanding how school principals make decisions in a school setting during the COVID-19 pandemic via qualitative exploratory research can provide in-depth information and can contribute to form structured measures regarding the decision-making process to develop intervention or teaching programs to enhance the ability for handling crises in school environments.

3.2. Research Questions

- How do school principals perceive crises?
- How do school principals make decisions under crisis, providing COVID-19 pandemic as an example?

3.3. Study Context

The local setting is a district of Gaziantep province. Gaziantep province is a cosmopolitan province with a population of two million. Over the last ten years, a large influx of refugees due to the civil war in Syria has come and settled in Gaziantep. Over time, many school-aged Syrian children started to get education in the schools of Gaziantep province. The students in rural districts are often involved in the family business in agriculture. The socioeconomic status of the district is low. The teachers have a high circulation rate between the schools in the province, which negatively affects forming a team culture in schools. These factors put the principals in this area in a unique position from a crisis and decision-making perspective.

Example crises local to this study setting can be given as follows. In a high school in the province, a former student shot his former teacher and himself due to an unrequited love situation on the grounds of the school (Anonymous, 2001). The deceased teacher asked her colleagues to let her convince the former student and let him in school to talk, yet the homicide happened while the other teachers were watching. Another event has happened at a school near the Syrian border, where a missile attack caused an explosion at the school, leading to a serious injury of a seventh-grader (Ergan, 2016). These examples show that the province of the subject is prone to various crises every day.

In the district that the study is done, there are 2 Preschools, 20 Primary Schools, 12 Middle Schools, and 4 High schools in the district. In 9 of 20 primary schools, multi-grade class teaching is applied. One of the middle schools is Imam and preacher middle school. This school was also used as a temporary education center for Syrians. One of the middle schools is a regional primary boarding middle school. There are two Imam and Preacher High Schools, both for girls and boys in the district. There are a Vocational High School and an Anatolian high school there.

3.4. Sampling and Participants

Participants are selected by using purposive convenience sampling. The sample is 18 school principals and one deputy principal working at schools at various levels of K-12 in the same district of Gaziantep. The interviews are conducted voluntarily. Degree levels of chosen schools are balanced as much as possible in the district. The participants are 18 males and one female school administrator. Gender equality could not be achieved because there is only one female school administrator.

Table 3.1 shows the relevant demographics of the participants. There are 54036 public schools in Turkey, but only 2,904 have a female principal. In other words, only 5.3 percent of schools have female principals (MoNE, 2020). It also means that the gender ratios in the study approximately reflect the Turkish average. The median age of the principals is 42.5. At the same time, the total duration of work as an administrator and the duration of work in the current institution has a significant variation from newly appointed principals to experienced administrators with 23 years of experience.

3.5. Data Collection

In this study, instruments for collecting qualitative data are used. Semi-structured interviews are the primary data collective instrument to investigate how school principals perceive crises and how they make decisions in a crisis. In addition, some documents are examined to support primary data. These documents are the pandemic school crisis plan (one of the schools in the data set), Improving Hygiene Conditions in Educational Institutions and Infection Prevention Guide (MoNE, 2020), and Notices of the Ministry of National Education, Board of Education and Discipline on the 'Education Program,' which started on August 31, 2020. The opinions and actions of the principals are recorded with the oral permissions of the principals and used to investigate research questions.

Table 3.1*Demographics of the participants*

Participants	Age	Education Level	School Type	Total Admin Duration (years)	Latest Admin Duration (years)
P1	41	EF	Middle School	12	6
P2	60	EI	Middle School	10	2
P3	36	TEF	Middle School	6	2
P4	38	EF	Middle School	6	6
P5	45	OF	Imam and Preacher High School	13	3
P6	48	FOF	Vocational and Technical High School	15	13
P7	52	EI*	Imam and Preacher Middle School	17	2
P8	35	OF	Anatolian High School	4	0.1
P9	46	MEA	Primary School	15	6
P10	44	MEA	Primary School	19	5
P11	60	EI*	Imam and Preacher High School	23	4
P12	38	EF	Primary School	4	4
P13	27	EF	Primary and Middle School	0.25	0.25
P14	47	OF	Primary and Middle School	18	0.5
P15	62	EI	Middle School	23	6
P16	32	EF	Primary and Middle School	2	0.25
P17	39	MEA	Middle School	3	1
P18	39	EF	Primary School	4	4
P19	60	EI*	Primary School	16	1

Notes: On the table, abbreviations are used for the education level of participants. EI is used for participants who graduated from the 3-years Education Institute. EF is used when participants graduate from a Faculty of Education. TEF means Technical Education Faculty. OF is used when participants have a bachelor's degree. FOF is used when participants having a bachelor's degree get the certification of pedagogic formation. MEA is used for participants with master's degrees in Educational Administration.

* They have completed their bachelor's degree from open education after the education institute.

3.5.1. Interview Questions

The semi-structured interviews questions which were formed by the researcher had been used to collect the data. The topics were the definition of a crisis according to the interviewee, the ownership of the decision-making authority, formation of crisis desk and crisis management teams, crisis planning process, correct action and decisions according to interviewees, possible damages caused by crises, and the factors affecting their emotions and decision making process. The most recent sources were examined by the researcher while preparing the interview questions are listed: Hamilton, Shih and Mohammed's (2016) Decision Styles Scale (DSS), interview question of Hamamcıoglu's master's thesis (2020), and Lisa Kells (2021) Interview Guide from doctoral thesis that is named Educational Administrators' Decision-Making Experiences during Covid-19 Pandemic.

After the researcher prepared the interview questions, and two experts faculty members with expertise in in educational administration and qualitative research methods provided expert opinion for the interview questions. These experts gave feedback on the sentence structure and comprehensibility of the questions. Based on the feedback provided by field experts, the interview questions were finalized. There were 12 main questions, with seven sub-questions detailing the main question specific to the COVID-19 pandemic. The prepared questions were sent for approval to the METU Graduate School of Social Sciences Ethical Committee. After being approved on June 16th, 2020, individual interviews have started and contacted local school principals. The approval document is given at Appendix A. District-level permission is requested and obtained from the district branch of the Ministry of National Education. The interview questions list is provided at Appendix B.

3.5.2. Data Collection Procedure

After the interview questions were formed and the opinions of the experts were taken, the data collection tool was sent to the Human Research Ethics Committee. Additionally, permission from the District Directorate of National Education is taken. On June 16th, 2020, the research was approved by the Applied Ethics Research Center. Data collection started with the opening of schools in September. The data collection

started on September 2nd, 2020 and was completed on November 20th, 2020. Interviewees were contacted personally, and interviews were conducted in person. Before the interview, a demographics form was presented and asked to be filled, which is provided in Appendix C. The interview was audio-recorded unless the interviewee requested otherwise. It should be pointed out that there was significant uncertainty regarding school closures during the data collection period due to the then newly started COVID-19 school closures. On the other hand, the data collection process was conducted at the school sites since the school principals have to be present on-site whether the schools are open or not. When the first data was collected, the schools were still closed for on-ground education. Later, school closures were lifted for support classes for volunteer students and routine education for first graders, and school closures were then lifted for other grade levels and courses one-by-one. Then school closures took effect again with a decision on November 18th, 2020. The history of school closures is given in more detail in Section 2.5.

3.6. Data Analysis

The data collected during interviews are transcribed. The descriptive and qualitative content analysis methods are used to answer the research questions. Also, thick description was used to understand data. The transcribed data is read carefully. Themes are established according to literature and interview questions. Deductive coding was used in analyzing the data. Deductive coding is a top-down method where the researcher looks for the supporting and contrasting evidence in the data according to the determined themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The analysis of the data was done by two analysis type of qualitative inquiry as descriptive and content analysis. In descriptive analysis, the participants' characteristics, overall perception of the interview and themes were examined. After those descriptions are presented, the content analysis which is the in-depth investigation of the data was conducted.

3.7. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness can be defined as a necessary step to increase the degree of confidence and validity of the data and its interpretation methods (Polit & Beck, 2014).

Among the several definitions and criteria of trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba (1985) listed that the best-known criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In order to increase the trustworthiness of the collected data, it was of utmost importance for the interviewees to provide honest answers. In order to ensure that, some precautions have been taken. District-level permission is taken to conduct interviews with local administrators. Identifiers are separated from the demographic data, and voice recordings are taken based on the interviewee's request. The precise location of the principals and their schools are only given here as Gaziantep province, while the degree level of the schools is still provided. It was essential to avoid any worry regarding the political and social climate of the administrators' experience.

To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the qualitative research, triangulation can be used. Patton (1987) states that using different data collection tools, including different interviewers, implementing multiple methods, or using different theories are valid strategies to achieve triangulation. Among these methods, using more than one data collection tool and sources might be a valid and desirable approach to triangulation according to Creswell (1997). This study utilized more than one data collection source, whose participants were from different types of schools and different backgrounds in order to achieve triangulation. Furthermore, the documentation on the crisis management obtained from interviewed principals is used to support the statements to strengthen the triangulation process.

In order to remain objective as a researcher, thick description is used. "Thick description refers to the researcher's task of both describing and interpreting observed social action (or behavior) within its particular context." (Ponterotto, 2006, p. 543). Both descriptive and content analysis were performed. Relevant documents were also reviewed to support the interviews. In addition, some of the transcripts are coded by my advisor for crosscheck.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

A study demands being transparent enough to make it possible to be replicated by other studies. With the explanations in the procedure part of the research, another researcher should be able to carry out the study in the light of the information given. Therefore, the procedures are clearly explained in this study in a detailed way.

Interview questions, which consist of the twelve questions and many sub-questions, are provided in the appendices. When it comes to the data collection procedure, this study examined school principals' perception of crisis and crisis management and decision making during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research is done in a district of Gaziantep. Interviews were planned with all school principals in the district, excluding kindergarten principals and class teachers authorized by the principal of the combined classes. The participants of this research are school principals from primary, secondary, and high school levels. Written consent is taken using the form in Appendix D. Verbal consent was obtained from the participants except P13 and P19 for the audio recording taken during the interviews. The researcher took notes while interviewing the participants who did not want to be audio recorded. The identity of participants was kept confidential, and the recordings of each interview were protected by the researcher. Participants were also informed that on the condition that they feel their confidentiality is disturbed, they would have the opportunity to withdraw from participating in the study.

3.9. Researcher's Role in the Study

In this section, I would like to discuss my role as a researcher. I aimed to show how I would be biased about the research topic and the schools. Researcher bias is a potential threat to lessen the validity of the research.

In order to remain objective as a researcher, I asked two experts from the field, to review my interview questions. In order to avoid misunderstandings in the data I collected, I asked additional questions to the school principals I interviewed.

To increase trustworthiness of the research, I was totally attuned to my bias. In order to ensure the validity of the study, the positive and negative effects of the study arising from my current job and my background are discussed. When I started to do interviews, I worked as a mathematics teacher in Gaziantep for two years. I was familiar with the environment where I collected data and met some of the participants before. my two years of teaching experience in Gaziantep before conducting interviews with the participants. I had worked with two different school principals during these two years. As a teacher in this district, I am totally aware of the problems that the school principals and teachers faced. I have worked in a rural school, and I can

say that most of the students do not come to school during the harvest season, even when there is no pandemic. Majority of the students help their families, or they are getting paid for their work. As a teacher, I observed that parents attendance of school meetings were limited. Teachers working in the region are generally not from Gaziantep therefore, on March 12, when distance education began, the majority of teachers returned to their hometowns. This has led to increased responsibilities of school principals during the pandemic. Conducting distance education in pandemic conditions was also difficult for both teachers and school principals. As a teacher working in the village, I can say that there are very few students participating in distance education. When the school reopened, I was aware that the students who could not attend the education had regressed both academically and socially. I was working in a village and reopening the school I worked as a teacher was postponed because there were conflicts of decision between various authorities. Therefore, that was a challenging time for both teachers and the principal of the school. My efforts to overcome my bias is also explained further in Section 3.7.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This study aims to explore how the school principals perceive crisis and how they make decisions under crisis. This study focuses on the COVID-19 as an ongoing crisis for the sake of understanding this process. Therefore, a qualitative framework was used to design my study. Strauss stated that data analysis methods in qualitative research could not be standardized, and standardizing data analysis will limit the researcher (Strauss, 1987). There are different concepts and views in the literature on qualitative data analysis. However, the striking common point is the importance of describing the data and revealing the themes. (Yildirim & Simsek, 2011). Therefore, Chapter 4, the results process, consists of two main parts: Descriptive analysis and content analysis. The data obtained through interviews and documents analysis will be presented in chapter 4. It consists of the interviews held with 19 school principals in a district in Gaziantep. Descriptive and content analysis are used to understand the data deeply.

4.1. Descriptive Analysis of the Interviews

Interview with the first participant.

The first interviewee has been working as a school administrator for twelve years. He studied in the Faculty of Education. He started to work as a teacher in 2002. He has been working in one of the largest middle schools in the district for six years. He was also a representative of a teacher union in the district. This interview was taken in the school the interviewee worked at and was forty minutes long. He said that he is excited about sharing his opinions about crisis management. He thinks that the biggest crisis in schools is interpersonal conflicts. Therefore, he was not interested in the

subject of the study, which focuses on crisis management and decision-making in the pandemic. Compared to the other school principals, he was relaxed and open to share his ideas. The first interview was done on 2nd September 2020. This interview was held after the closure of schools and the summer vacation. It was also held just after the teachers' in-service vocational training week and at the beginning of the make-up distance education for students. On 31st August 2020, the courses for the exams (LGS, TYT, and AYT) were started for eighth and 12th-grade students.

Interview with the second participant.

The second interviewee has worked as a school administrator for ten years. His latest institution is a middle school in a village where he has worked for two years. The school he works at is the second nearest to the border. He is 60 years old. He graduated from a 3-years Institute of Education. In 1986, he started to work as a teacher. The interview with the second participant took 35 minutes. The second interview was also done on 2nd September 2020. The second interview was done in the same conditions as the first interview.

During the interview, he shared their ideas about the COVID-19 crisis without hesitancy. He went into details about the principals' duties in the pandemic, the problems of the village schools in the pandemic, and the problems of transported education since the school he works at is the local center of the transported education. The transportation of the students who do not have schools in their villages is provided by the service buses. In the school, there are students from different villages. He also focuses on the problems of distance education for students in a village school.

The interview with the third participant.

The third participant is working in one of the schools in the district center. This school is the middle school which also includes a preschool. He has worked as a school administrator for six years. However, he has been working in the current school for two years. He is also an active member of the largest teacher union.

On 12th September 2021, the interview was conducted at the middle school where he works. Unlike other participants, he preferred to have the interview in the

teachers' room. The recorded part of the interview took approximately 25 minutes. When voice recordings were turned off, he explained his ideas about crisis management in detail. Therefore, I can say that the interview took approximately 35 minutes. His answers are more precise than other participants. This interview was done in the second week of the weekend courses for the exams (DYK). Therefore, he focused on what he did for students in this period.

The interview with the fourth participant.

The fourth participant is the only participant who works as a deputy principal. This interview took 26 minutes and was made on 25th September 2020. It is essential for the data set because he works in a regional boarding secondary school. He has worked as a deputy principal for six years in the same school. Boarding schools have more financial resources than other types of schools. However, these schools also have different problems. He mentioned the problems revealed in the school and how they are solved. As the deputy principal, he explained what he knew and saw objectively during the interview since he did not have full decision-making authority for his school. He also clearly explained how he behaved in crises. He gave concrete examples of how decisions are made in a crisis and how bureaucracy works.

The interview with the fifth participant.

He has worked as a school principal at Imam and Preacher High School for girls for three years. However, his total duration of administration duty is thirteen years. The interview took approximately 40 minutes. The interview was done on 29th September 2020. At the beginning of the interview, he was nervous while answering the interview questions. He felt more comfortable continuing the interview and gave more detailed answers to my questions. Staff or teachers came in to ask something, causing the conversation to be interrupted twice. I observed that the interviewee was sincere with the teachers and school staff. He shared a sad event about the crisis and crisis intervention in his school. He was still sad about this incident that resulted in a student having a heart attack and dying.

At the interview, there was an agenda regarding receiving the My School-Clean certificate. Therefore, he focused on this certification a lot and explained this certification process. This certificate was given by the Turkish Standards Institution (TSE).

The interview with the sixth participant.

The interviewee is the pioneer principal in the district. He has worked as a school principal in the same district for 15 years. He previously worked as a manager for 13 years at the school where he is currently working. After working at the Anatolian High School in the district for two years, he was appointed as the principal of his old school, the vocational high school. He said that his experience in vocational high school is 13 years. He is also one of the teacher's union's representatives in the district. It was tough to determine the date and time of the interview, as he had to visit different schools as a union representative.

Anatolian vocational and Anatolian technical program students started their vocational education and internship programs as of 28th September, with the article published by the Ministry of National Education on 25.09.2020 (MoNE, 2020). On 1st October 2020, this interview was done. On the date of the interview, schools were opened for 12th graders. Students were at their school because of courses for exams and vocational education and training.

He was also a trainer in the candidate teacher training program in the district. Therefore, I met him in my training in 2018. He welcomed me very warmly as he knew me beforehand. He gave apparent answers to my questions during the interview. He had some questions asked again to make sure he understood them correctly. He showed great interest in the subject.

There are 40 teachers and 650 students in the vocational high school. He thinks that wherever there are people, there can be a crisis. For this reason, he described interpersonal conflicts as crises. When I asked his opinions after the interview I recorded, he said that:

In some crises, we cannot decide like a judge or look for a criminal. We are educators, and we should approach crises like educators. By blaming people, we throw them out of education and destroy their hope for the future no need to do this.

The interview with the seventh participant.

The interviewee has worked in Imam and preacher Middle School as a school principal for two years. His total administration duration is 17 years. There are 28 teachers and 465 students in his school. 200 of 465 students are Syrian. He stated that 150 of these Syrian students have problems with the Turkish language. He gave an example of a crisis in which he made decisions by taking risks and not caring too much about bureaucracy. He said that the most important condition for managing crises well is that the school manager takes risks.

We smelled smoke in the 13th minute of the interview, so we interrupted the interview. He assigned the school janitor to find the cause of the smoke smell. In this situation, he tried to find the source of smoke calmly. When it was understood that the smell of smoke was not in the school, we continued our interview. The interview took 46 minutes.

The interview with the eighth participant.

The interview took approximately 40 minutes. When I interviewed him, he had worked at his current school for one month. His experience as a school administrator is four years. He is working in an Anatolian High School. There are 644 students and 39 teachers in this school. He said that he found this district and the school he was assigned to very quiet and peaceful because he had previously worked in the crime-ridden areas of Gaziantep. He gave some crisis examples while thinking about his previous experience.

He greeted me very friendly. He answered my questions openly without deception. He mentioned that the pandemic is a huge crisis and affects education. He also mentioned that bureaucracy has adverse effects on decision-making in a crisis. In crisis intervention, he emphasized the importance of knowledge and being calm while controlling emotions.

The interview with the ninth participant.

The interviewee has worked in one of the crowded primary schools in the district. There are 893 students and 34 teachers in the school. One hundred seventy-eight of these students are Syrian. Twenty-five students at school have a language problem. There is a classroom for students with special needs. When this interview was done, preschool students, 1st graders, and second graders started the school.

He was the school administrator who received the most management training compared to the other participants. After completing his 4-year undergraduate education in public administration, he received his master's degree in educational administration. He has worked as a school principal for 15 years.

He mentioned that the scale of the crisis and risks related to the crisis affect his decisions. He emphasized that it is making a decision together and sharing the risk and responsibility of that decision instead of making a decision alone. For this reason, he said that he tried to make his decisions together with the group.

The interview with the tenth participant.

The interviewee has worked in a primary school in the district center for five years. There are 500 students and 19 teachers in this school. Half of the students are Syrian. Ninety of these have a language problem. His total administration duration is 19 years. He is one of the experienced principals in my data set. He also has a Master's degree in Educational Administration. The interview took approximately 50 minutes.

He thinks that crisis management is a skill. He said that if the person who is supposed to manage the crisis has a low ability to solve it, the crisis will get bigger, and a higher authority has to solve it.

The interview with the eleventh participant.

The interviewee has worked in Imam and Preacher High School for boys for four years. The total administration duration is 23 years. There are 178 students and 18 teachers in this school.

He answered all my interview questions in detail. For this reason, the interview took approximately one hour. When he gave many details unrelated to my research topic, I asked a different question to pull him back into crisis management and decision making. At the end of the interview, he mentioned that human health should be considered first when making decisions in crises.

The interview with the twelfth participant.

The interviewee has worked as a school principal in a village primary school for four years. Before that, he had worked as a principal authorized teacher in an elementary school with a united class for six years. One hundred sixty-four students and 11 teachers are in this school. 2 classrooms for students with special needs are also there. His school is the second nearest school to the Syrian border. The interview took 55 minutes. When the interview was done, the village schools were opened. He defined himself as a teacher. Therefore, he took risks and decided against bureaucracy to achieve the success and well-being of children.

The interview with the thirteenth participant.

The interviewee has worked as a school principal in a village school that is both primary and middle school. He is the youngest principal in my data set, and also, we are working at the same school. Therefore, I was cautious with this interview not to jeopardize the validity of my research. He worked as a Turkish teacher in our school for two years. Since the administrative staff of our school was appointed to other places, he was appointed as the principal. At the time of this interview, he worked as a principal at our school for three months. There are 123 primary school students, 130 Middle School students, and 17 teachers in this school. There are 32 Syrian students. This school is the center of the transported education, which means that students from villages with no school come by school busses. For this reason, the crisis is familiar.

On the COVID-19 Pandemic, the decisions about the schools in villages were conflicted. Regarding the opening of village schools, he explained that he did not open the school due to the conflicting decisions of the pandemic authorities and the Ministry of National Education.

The interview with the fourteenth participant.

The interviewee has worked as a school principal for 18 years. However, he just has worked in his current institution for five months. The school he works at is the nearest school on the Syrian border. The middle school and the primary school are in the same building. There are 23 teachers, 137 primary school students, and 151 middle school students. Twenty-six of these students migrated from Syria.

He mentioned that school principals are not in a decision-making position in significant crises such as the pandemic; they only implement the decisions.

The interview with the fifteenth participant.

He has been working as a principal for 23 years, 6 of which are at his current school. He graduated from 3-years Education Institute. There are 219 Middle School students and 23 teachers in this middle school.

He was so kind and greeted me warmly. He answered some questions by using metaphor. He was also mentioned that experience affects decision-making in a crisis. The interview took approximately 35 minutes.

The interview with the sixteenth participant.

He is the village school principal with 88 primary and 79 middle school students. The primary school and middle school are in the same building. He has worked as a school principal for two years. However, he just started to work in his current school three months ago when the interview was done. He was interested in my topic of study. Although the recorded part of the interview took 25 minutes, he shared the ideas about decision-making in crisis off the record. The whole interview took 40 minutes. He had a different point of view about decision-making, and he said mood affects decisions.

The interview with the seventeenth participant.

He has worked as a school principal in the middle school for one year. His total administration duration is three years. He has a master's degree in Educational Administration. There are 240 students and 12 teachers in this school.

The interview took 38 minutes. He mentioned that the most crucial part of a crisis is to prepare for the crisis before the crisis. His examples of the crisis are helpful to understand how the school administrator decides a crisis.

The interview with the eighteenth participant.

The interviewee is the only woman participant in my study. She has worked as a school principal at the primary school for four years. There are 200 students and nine teachers in this school. The interview took 38 minutes. Her definition of crisis is different from others. She also mentioned the decisions she made to handle school closing in the pandemic.

The interview with the nineteenth participant.

The interviewee has worked as a school principal since 2004, but he has worked at his current school for one year. The school he works at is a small village school. There are 107 students and five teachers. The interview took approximately 30 minutes.

4.2. Content analysis of the Interviews

The data were scrutinized inductively in this section. This section consists of two parts because this study has two main research questions. The first research question is how school principals perceive crisis. The second one is how they decide crisis during the pandemic. The first part is focused on the themes that emerged related to crisis perception of the principals, and the second part is focused on the themes that emerged related to decision making in crisis and decision making during the pandemic. For the first research question, one of the themes is Crisis Perception. Under this

theme, three sub-themes emerged: Crisis Definition, Types of Crises, and Why the Pandemic is a Crisis. There are two themes for the second research question: Crisis Management and Decision Making in Crisis. Four sub-themes emerged under the theme Crisis Management: Crisis Desk, the methods, and applications for better crisis management and less damage to institutions, the damages of the poorly managed crisis to students and teachers, crisis plan.

Table 4.1

Emergent Themes and Subthemes of the Study

Themes	Sub Themes
Crisis perception	Crisis definition
	Types of crisis
	Why is pandemic a crisis?
Crisis management	Crisis desk
	The methods and applications for better crisis management
	Damages to teachers and students when a crisis is not well managed
	Crisis plans
Decision making in crisis	Factors affecting decision making in crisis

4.2.1. Crisis Perception

The first theme of the study was Crisis Perception; three sub-themes emerged under this theme (Fig. 2). The data were analyzed to understand how school principals perceive crisis. It was essential to show these findings and analyze them because the perception of crisis can affect their decision-making process in crisis. In addition, both the definition of crisis and crisis examples the participants shared assist in examining their crisis perception. Three themes and several codes were revealed with content analysis.

Figure 2

Subthemes of Crisis Perception



4.2.1.1. Crisis Definition.

Principals participating in the study were asked to define crisis because crisis perception may affect their decision-making in a crisis. Instead of offering alternatives from the crisis definitions accepted by the researcher, the crisis definitions were made by the participants themselves and helped determine their perceptions of the crisis. Nine codes emerged: nonroutine, unexpected events, extraordinary situations, pending subject resolution, acute problems and events, unforeseen problems, uncertainty, disaster situation, and the chaotic environment when the participants' definitions were analyzed. Table 4.1 shows the patterns as stated in interviews.

Emerging codes under the theme indicate that a crisis is nonroutine, unexpected events or extraordinary situations. Almost half of the participants define the crisis as nonroutine. Their crisis definitions are similar to each other. Out of normal order and negative situations revealed in ordinary times were emphasized in their definitions. P7 made the extended definition.

P7 defined crisis as:

In my opinion, any operation flow that is not suitable for the current situation or not suitable for the ordinary situation reflects the crisis because there is a normal course of events. If some events are contrary to this course, it is a crisis situation. (P7)

P13 defined crisis as: “Situations that will disrupt routine work and functioning at school are crises”. (P13)

P19 and P11 defined the crisis comprehensively. P11 defines the crisis as a factor that extraordinarily affects normal life. When the crisis was mentioned, the first thing that comes to mind is extraordinary circumstances for most participants. On the contrary to other participants, P19 mentioned the change in his crisis definition. P19 defined crisis as: “There are also crises that do not go right, adverse events, a new problem, and changes other than disease. Curriculum and system changes are also crises.”

P4 and P17 define crises as nonroutine and unexpected events. P4 defined the crisis as an instantaneous situation in the normal course and gave clear examples to explain well.

In normal life, sudden situations that disrupt the normal order seem like a crisis to me. Let me tell you what normal situations are, for example, in terms of school. In terms of the school, we can say that the continuing education is closed suddenly, without causing any harm to anyone.

Unlike P4, P17 emphasized the negative aspect and defined the crisis as an adverse event in routine.

Table 4.2

Codes in Crisis Definition

Sub Theme	Code	Participants
Crisis Definition	Nonroutine	P3, P4, P6, P7, P9, P11, P12, P13, P17, P19
	Extraordinary situation	P3, P6, P8, P9, P11, P16, P19
	Unexpected events	P4, P5, P8, P11, P17, P19
	Subject pending resolution	P10, P15, P18, P11
	Acute problems and events	P1, P2, P7, P14
	Unforeseen problems	P1, P17
	Uncertainty	P15
	Disaster situation	P2

4.2.1.2. Types of Crises in Schools.

During the interview, the participants were asked to give an example of a crisis. The crisis examples provided important clues about their perceptions of the crisis. Codes that emerged under the crisis examples are COVID-19 Pandemic, School Closing, interpersonal conflicts, and natural disasters. According to their crisis examples, the pandemic is seen as the crisis example for almost half of the participants.

Table 4.3

Codes Emergent for the Question of Crisis Examples

Sub Theme	Code	Participants
Crisis Examples	Pandemic	P1,P2,P3,P7,P9,P12,P13,P15 ,P19
	School closing	P4,P6,P7,P14,P15
	Natural disasters	P2,P3,P9,P16,P17
	Interpersonal conflicts	P1,P3,P6,P10,P18
	Accidents	P8,P10,P12,P17
	Health problems	P5,P8,P12
	Transportation and nutrition problems	P12, P13
	Sexual abuse	P6, P16
	Attacks on schools	P17
	Suicide	P16
	Curriculum change	P19
	Children with psychological trauma	P16

Pandemic and School Closures.

Pandemic is seen as a crisis by almost half of the participants. Some participants perceived school closures as a crisis created by the pandemic in schools. P7 and P15 exemplified school closure due to the pandemic as a crisis. P15, one of the

experienced principals, emphasized the uncertainty in the pandemic. Participants stated that:

This pandemic covid-19 process, the closure of schools or our continuing education in remote access or the uncertainty in the teacher, the uncertainty in us, the frequent changes in regulations, the frequent publication of notices. (P15)

For example, while schools typically provide face-to-face education, there is no face-to-face education but online education. This is a crisis environment. Therefore, the Covid-19 process is a crisis environment in accordance with the process we live in. (P7)

Natural Disasters.

P2, P3, P9, P16, P17 give crisis examples of earthquakes, fire, and floods. P2 defined a crisis as a natural disaster. Therefore, he said earthquakes, floods, and pandemics as crisis examples. Except for P9, the rest of the participants work in small schools. P16 has the two-year of experience, and P17 has three-year experience.

Interpersonal Conflicts.

Interpersonal conflicts are seen as crises, especially by two groups of principals. The first group is working in bigger schools than others. The school P1 works in has 33 teachers and 620 students. There are 40 teachers and 650 students at the school P6 works. The school where P10 works have 500 students and 20 teachers. Although they have more experiences than others, they exemplified interpersonal conflicts as a crisis due to working with many people. P6 stated that:

Especially among the students in the school, among the teachers, there is a crisis in every field where there are people. The crisis is an extraordinary situation. It can be between the student and the student. It can be between the teacher and the teacher, and it can be between the administrator and the student. (P6)

The administrative experience of P3 is six years. He gave a crisis example of conflicts between parents and teachers and conflicts among students. The administrative experience of P18 is four years. She explained that teachers' ignorance of the Law on Civil Servants No. 657 could create conflict.

A friend objected to a situation that might benefit the children and said no, he could not do it. Think of it as a conflict, then I spoke to my friend and mentioned Law No. 657 to this teacher, problem solved. (P3)

Transportation and Nutrition Problems.

The interviewees P12 and P13 focus on transportation and nutrition problems because they work in rural schools the transportation centers. Transported education is the education carried out in villages and hamlets that do not have a school and whose school has been closed for some reason, by transporting primary school students to primary schools, which are the transportation centers, daily. The school busses and meals of these students are financed by the Ministry of National Education. Nutrition problems can be part of the health problems. However, the students have lunch in the school, and the meals come from a food company that the district of national education arranged. For this reason, it could not be just a health problem.

Health Problems.

P5, P8, and P12 exemplified the crisis as a health problem. However, these health problems they mentioned were different from each other. P12 is working in a primary school. Therefore, P12 gave importance to the children's health. P12 stated that: "The spread of infectious diseases such as smallpox, mumps, measles at school, or the inability of students to come to school even because of the flu. (P12)

P5 and P8 work in high school, and a student's health problem in high school is perceived as a crisis by principals only when it is significant and at school. P5 states:

A student at school suddenly faints or has a heart attack. I have been through it too, and one of our students died of a heart attack. We made First Aid Response but could not save him. I mean, you know everything at that moment, but I wonder if I did wrong, I wonder if something will happen, there is uneasiness inside me. (P5)

For example, it is a crisis when a student is disturbed, and a student has a crisis within the boundaries of the school. I am talking about the class he is in (P8)

The four codes were comprised of P16. They are sexual abuse, natural disasters, suicides, and children with psychological disorders.

When I think of a crisis, I think of extraordinary events that must be dealt with at school. This includes, for example, sexual abuse and suicides, crises of natural disasters, crises such as earthquakes, floods, fires, or children who are psychologically traumatized (P16).

Accidents.

Incidents, injuries, and traffic accidents were given as examples. P8, P10, P12, and P17 exemplified accidents and injuries as crisis examples. Similar to health problems, the primary school principals were able to give more examples of crises that students might face due to the ages of the primary school students.

4.2.1.3. Pandemic as a crisis.

When explicitly asked, all participants think that the COVID-19 pandemic is a crisis. However, the reason for these thoughts differentiates among interviewees. The participants have various opinions about why the pandemic is a crisis.

Some participants thought that the pandemic was a crisis due to its broad impact. They have experience in administration of over 13 years. They emphasized education to explain the areas affected by the pandemic. Participants state that:

It affects all individuals, the country, the economy, everything. It affects the school, the student, the teacher, all business lines, and people's social lives. (P5)

It restricted freedom. It hindered education, health, and social life. (P19)

Some principals explained why the pandemic is a crisis by focusing on education. These principals' administration experience time is over 15. They mentioned why the pandemic is an educational crisis.

P15 mentioned that pandemic affects the quality of education and relationships between school personnel. 8th and 12th-grade students graduated from their school during the pandemic, regardless of their achievement or attendance level. During the pandemic, he emphasized that there was no student measurement and evaluation system. P15 stated that:

...we do not contact our education community teachers.... students graduated last year. In fact, we passed them all. Even if their performance was weak or mostly absent, we passed them without an exam. It will probably be the same this year. All of these are issues that need to be resolved, issues waiting to be resolved. (P15)

P10 mentioned the difficulties in continuing distance education. He is working in a primary school with 500 students, 250 of whom are Syrian immigrants. He emphasized that accessing distance education was a problem, and students could not be motivated in distance education.

Parents do not have internet access. It is tough to motivate students remotely. Since distance education is not sustainable, it is a crisis and needs to be resolved. During the pandemic process, face-to-face education conditions need to be created, and measures must be taken for it. (P10)

P7 compared distance education with face-to-face education. He said students improve academically and gain positive behaviors with face-to-face education at school. He argued that distance education only provides teaching. P7 stated that:

... this is a crisis environment because I think that we cannot provide the education we should because education is not just about teaching. Students need to be in school, and they have to be in mutual communication with teachers to be able to give education and gain positive behaviors (P7)..

P14 has a similar perspective to P7. The village schools were open when he was interviewed. However, parents were free to send their children to school or not. He mentioned that some students could not come to school because they and their parents were terrified of COVID-19. In addition, he mentioned how COVID-19 affected the educational environment and stated that:

In educational environments, the student needs to socialize with the student and the teacher, but this cannot be done because of the pandemic. People are staying away from each other.

Participants emphasized that school closing was disrupting the routine, and the pandemic was seen as an unexpected event.

As I mentioned in the definitions, if sudden external events disrupt the standard order while a standard order continues, it is a crisis, and we have to finish an ongoing education due to an illness. (P4)

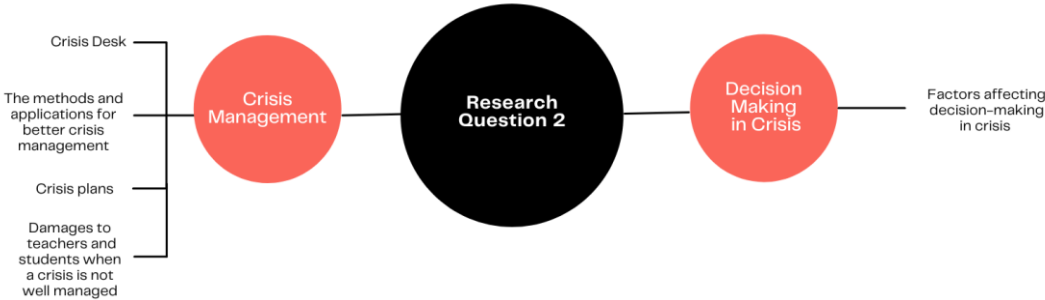
The pandemic caught the education community too unprepared... As you know, education has stopped since March 13. I mean, there couldn't have been a bigger crisis than this. (P8)

Additionally, P6 and P3 thought the pandemic was a crisis because it was both a nonroutine and extraordinary situation. He said it is an extraordinary situation in which normal education could not continue.

P16 and P9 thought that the pandemic was a crisis because it was an extraordinary situation. P9 mentioned the pandemic needs extraordinary precautions. In addition, P16, P17, and P18 thought that the pandemic was a crisis due to the risk of contagion. P2, P12, P13 stated that a pandemic is a crisis because it negatively affects health. P12 also mentioned a pandemic, a situation that can endanger the health of students and teachers.

For research question two, two themes have emerged: Crisis management and decision making in a crisis as can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3
Themes and Subthemes related to RQ2



4.2.2. Crisis Management

Four sub-themes emerged under the theme Crisis Management: Crisis Desk, the methods, and applications for better crisis management and less damage to institutions, the damages of the poorly managed crisis to students and teachers, crisis plan.

4.2.2.1. Crisis Desk.

There are many ideas and thoughts about the crisis desk. Eight of the participants stated that they were involved in the crisis desk process. However, their perceptions of the crisis desk are different. Except for the COVID-19 Crisis, five different participants explained four different crisis desks convened for other crises. These are the meetings with teachers during crises, Occupational Safety and Health Committee, the guidance committee, and a formation similar to the disciplinary committee. In addition, some of the school principals described the meetings they attended during the pandemic as a crisis desk. In these meetings, they were given tasks related to the control of the pandemic. Similarly, they described the meetings held to give instructions about exams as crisis desks.

P3 named the meeting with teachers when the crisis arose as the crisis desk. However, he mentioned that the crisis desk he mentioned could not be set up in schools with a large number of people.

You cannot do this in a school with 70,80,100 teachers, but our school is very small, we have 250 students, we have 14 teachers, and in a crisis, we gather almost all the teachers and immediately create a crisis desk about crisis management, make a plan and program and try to explain this to the students. In our school, all teachers are at school every day, and we can find all the 14 teachers at any time. When that happens, we immediately hold a meeting and set up a crisis desk. By explaining the situation to the students, we try to manage the crisis in a calm and quiet manner. (P3)

P1 and P7 defined the Occupational Health and Safety Committee as a crisis desk.

Both of these principals, who have experience in administration over 12 years, work in Middle School. These participants stated that:

What you call a crisis desk exists in schools. We also have it in our school. For example, we have a committee in our school within the scope of Occupational Safety, we have an intervention team, and that team is updated every year. (P1)

There is always risk in the school environment. There are also risks in terms of occupational safety, so we have a crisis desk that is responsible for the risky things of the whole school, not just covid-19. This crisis desk has identified risk fields both in other areas and in this pandemic. These determined risks were processed in the Mebbis System and informed to whom it may concern about the precautions to be taken. They also sent it to the occupational safety experts. (P7)

P6 defined the executive guidance committee as a crisis desk in normal times. This committee is used to take precautions before the crisis and to solve conflicts between students. This committee is specified in the legislation, and its establishment is mandatory. According to the legislation, “At every educational institution, an executive guidance and psychological counseling committee are to be formed to plan the guidance and counseling services and ensure the coordination and cooperation in the institution” (MoNE, 2001). This committee is not directly responsible for crisis management, yet it is supposed to facilitate the relations among the constituents of the school environment. P6 provided interpersonal conflicts as an example of crisis and stated that the guidance and physical counseling committee acts as a crisis desk in this case. According to his example about this topic, intervention and informing the school principal are more important than the crisis desk when a more serious crisis occurs.

In our school, we have an executive guidance committee, which we can think of as a kind of crisis desk. Here, we evaluate the negative situations that may occur in the school. Through this commission and the commissions of the teachers' board, we exchange views in order to solve extraordinary situations in the school. For example, if a student has an accident in the electrical department, my friends should intervene and inform the top official. (P6)

P8 was involved in creating a crisis desk for substance abuse and violence as a vice-principal at his previous school. The crisis desk he describes is very similar to the work of the disciplinary committee in schools. He described this crisis desk in detail, which included information such as the aim of the crisis desk, who attended the crisis desk, and who was responsible and decision-making authority.

Some students at our school had problems with substance abuse. They had a terrible habit stemming from their families. It could inevitably be reflected in the school. As soon as we encountered this problem, we thought of setting up a crisis desk. Apart from that, violent incidents were common in our school. There were stab wounds and gun attacks on the schoolyard. We have worked in this way to be prepared for crises like these. The primary custodian of this crisis desk is any vice-principal at the school, who is usually the vice principal responsible for discipline. This person naturally becomes the head of the Disciplinary Board. Then, there were the teachers from different subjects, teachers of different genders, and, when necessary, one or more of the school personnel included in this team. (P8)

10 of 19 participants stated that they were not involved in the process of creating a crisis desk during the pandemic, neither in the district national education directorate nor at their school. Three participants mentioned a crisis desk in the District

Directorate of National Education. Five of the principals thought there was a crisis desk for COVID-19 in their school.

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and ensure that individuals infected with the virus are isolated from society, filiation teams were established with the notice of the Ministry of Internal Affairs under the administration of the Governorate and District Governorates. The role of these filiation teams was to track and register new COVID-19 patients and possible people in contact. In the notice on isolation measures sent by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to 81 provincial governors, dated August 14, 2020, it was stated that neighborhood inspection teams would be established within the provincial epidemic control center (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2020). Although this task has nothing to do with the school administration, it can be stated that school principals and teachers are assigned to these teams with this notice. Some participants stated that their meetings as part of these teams were crisis desks. Three of them defined the meetings for filiation teams as a crisis desk.

School principals have been given various duties. For example, they were a part of the filiation teams and VEFA social support groups during the pandemic process. School principals P2, P4, and P5 primarily defined the filiation team as a crisis desk. P4, the school deputy principal, mentioned that he did not attend any crisis desk, but the school principal in his school attended the crisis desk for filiation. P5 mentioned that filiation teams are seen as a crisis desk in the District Directorate of National Education. In filiation teams, school principals were given a duty in filiation. P5 stated that there are school principals in the sub-committee of the crisis desk established due to filiation. P2 was not part of the filiation team in March because of his age. However, they gave him a new responsibility when the interview was done. P2 stated that:

In this process, the duration of the crisis desk was as follows. After the schools were closed in March, they took the school principals first. A team called the Filiation Team was formed. Then I talked to the district director of national education. Because I'm over 60, would you mind removing me from the team? They did. (P2)

VEFA social support groups, which were formed under the coordination of the governorship and district governorships, were responsible for providing all the needs of people aged 65 and over and those with chronic diseases, from pensions to food, from medicines to hygiene materials. (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2020). VEFA

social support groups started at the beginning of the pandemic to provide basic needs to seniors over 65 and people with chronic diseases.

Two of the participants, P2 and P12, mentioned that VEFA social support groups in district governorships were crisis desks. Some of the principals thought that the meetings held to inform and distribute tasks were crisis desks. School-related or unrelated tasks were assigned at the meetings they defined as the crisis desk. P2 also defined meetings like VEFA social support groups as a crisis desk.

P12 also defines VEFA social support group meetings as a crisis desk. In VEFA social support group, they helped older citizens during curfew.

We were not involved in the crisis desk process in our school because there was no crisis environment in our school due to this pandemic. We were not in such an environment in the district directorate of national education. However, since the district governorship had given us duties in the VEFA social support group before, we performed our duties there. A curfew was imposed on citizens over the age of 65. In the Vefa group, we carried out their operations by withdrawing their wages, paying bills, depositing money. (P12)

P1 and P2 described the meeting where the decisions regarding the application of LGS (high school entrance exam) will be made, and the guidelines regarding the application of the exam will be conveyed to the principals as a crisis desk. They stated that about 15 people, including the Director of District Directorate of National Education, District National Education Branch Directors, and school principals, attended this meeting. Also, they mentioned that the last decision in this meeting was taken by the director of the District Directorate of National Education. P1 stated that he was at the crisis desk, giving his opinion on the issue because his school is one of the biggest schools in the district. In addition, he stated that a crisis desk was just created in special cases such as LGS, and there is no crisis desk due to the pandemic. He mentioned that when the first case was seen in Turkey in March, there was no need for a crisis desk because schools were closed and there were no students. P1 stated:

We held meetings at the District Directorate of National Education. The biggest crisis was the high school entrance exam (LGS) related to this pandemic in this process, and we experienced it because when it was said that the pandemic was at its peak, our students had an exam. We brought students to schools. For example, 220 students came to our school. As a crisis desk, we held a meeting with principals working in all schools to take the exam. We decided together what can be done, how to distribute disinfectants, how to help students, and how to reach them, from the distribution of exam documents to everything related to the exam. Of course, we came to a consensus. The

opinions of the District Director of National Education also guided us. They are applied. (P1)

At the crisis desk established for LGS, P2 mentioned that although he offered more appropriate solutions to the pandemic situation, those at the crisis desk wanted to apply the exam as stated by the Ministry of Education. P2 stated that:

A meeting was also held for LGS on how to take precautions and measures in the exam. At my school, there were several classes that could divide students into ten students each class. I suggested implementing this. However, my proposal was rejected because the ministry wanted 20 students to take the exam in each class. (P2)

P5, P6, P7, P11, and P15 mentioned a crisis desk in their school. Each of these participants had 13 years and more experience as a school administrator. However, their statements about the crisis desk in their school were slightly different.

P7 mentioned that there is a risk assessment group in school. According to Occupational Health and Safety Law No. 6331, the Ministry of National Education required that every school has a risk assessment group. He thought that the crisis desk in the school was the risk assessment group. He also mentioned that:

As a school, we have a risk assessment group. We have a crisis desk for all risky situations at school, not just covid-19. In this group, we took the pandemic as a risk, as well as other risks at the school, and we processed it into the system in Mebbis, and we evaluate this process together with our relevant assistant principals, guidance teachers, and club teachers, school-parent union representative, and we make decisions about our school together. (P7)

P5 also implied a crisis desk for the “My School: Clean” certification. He thought that this meeting was a crisis desk in his school. This meeting was held to inform teachers about their duties which are related to what they have to do.

In the school, under my administration, the assistant principal I assigned, collaborating with all the teachers, and by dividing duties at work, which teacher will be assigned where, which teachers will do what, all have been determined. (P5)

The crisis desk was created in the school P6 works. It aims to solve possible problems that students may encounter when they come to school. They formed a team with school administrators and teachers. Instead of making a new decision at this crisis desk, information was given about how the rules and previous decisions should be applied at school.

P6 stated that the District Directorate of National Education did not create a crisis desk, but there was a solution mechanism. He hesitated about whether the meetings held could be considered as an indicator of having a crisis desk or not. He mentioned that these meetings and chatting applications like WhatsApp were used to inform school principals by the District Directorate of National Education. P6 stated that:

As far as I know, no crisis desk has been set up in the District Directorate of National Education. In other words, maybe there is an unnamed solution mechanism; maybe it is called the crisis desk. Meetings have been held with the district national education directorate and 5-6 times since the beginning of the process. The meetings are held under the chairmanship of the district director of national education, with the participation of District National Education Branch Directors and school principals. For example, the district directorate of national education informs us, school principals, about the measures to be taken in schools. These can change daily, both via meetings and WhatsApp.(P6)

P3, P4, and P12 mentioned that there is not any crisis desk that the school principals attended. P3 knows there are meetings about COVID-19, but the governor, mayor, and the provincial director of national education attended these meetings. P4 said that the school principals were not at the crisis desk but were in filiation teams. P12 stated that the crisis desk was not created either in the school or the district director of national education due to the coronavirus. However, the district governor's office assigned them to the VEFA Support Group. He mentioned that the district of national education reported the letters from the ministries to the school principals and informed them about how the operation would be during the COVID 19. Similarly, P13 and P14 stated that not like a crisis desk, but meetings were held with school principals in the process. These meetings aim to inform school principals about the decisions of the Ministry of National Education or Provincial Pandemic Board. P6 stated that: “When students come to school, we have created a crisis desk to solve their problems.” (P6)

However, the explanation on this statement in explaining this situation, this crisis desk was created to ensure that students at school comply with the pandemic rules. The school principal has notified the teachers about the pandemic rules through the crisis desk.

P10 stated that the crisis desk could not be set up at school without a bureaucratic rule or legal basis. To create a crisis desk in school, he needs the order

from higher authorities. P10 stated that: “In order to do this, we need to receive an order, a notice, something, that is, there must be a legal basis”. (P10)

Other participants did not define the meetings as a crisis desk. P16, P17, and P18 stated that they were not a part of the crisis desk. P16 mentioned the meetings related to the “My School: Clean” certification. All of them mentioned the meetings with the district director of National Education to inform school principals. In addition, P16 attended meetings with the district director of National Education to get information about the precautions of pandemics. He held meetings in his school to inform teachers about this topic.

Information meetings were held in provincial and district national education directorates, not decision-making meetings. In other words, the school principals were not asked what we could do because the provincial and district sanitation boards approved these decisions, and by the members of the scientific committee, so we didn't bother too much with the infrastructure of the decisions since we thought that these people were experts in the professional field. (P16)

P19 said that he did not attend the crisis desk for the pandemic. However, he mentioned that the school principals participated in the filiation teams and VEFA Support Groups. Precautions related to COVID-19 were discussed at the regular annual meeting. In addition, different authorities held online meetings to handle the COVID-19 crisis.

Findings regarding the crisis desk reveal that school principals do not know that the crisis desk is a structure that should be established in schools. It is seen that school principals only form the committees specified by the Ministry of National Education, and some school principals describe these committees as crisis desks. They stated that the crisis desk could not be established at school without a bureaucratic infrastructure. They also mentioned that there was no need to set up a crisis desk at school because schools were closed due to the pandemic. Five participants stated that there is a crisis desk in their school. It is understood that the crisis desks mentioned by the school principals are the meetings held to provide information flow to the teachers, or the risk assessment commission in the school is seen as the crisis desk.

Principal Roles in COVID-19.

During the pandemic, school principals held many school-related and unrelated tasks. 14 of the 19 participants mentioned that they had assumed various responsibilities upon the governorship and the Ministry of the Interior's requests. It is understood that the school principals played an active role in pandemic filtration teams. The principals were tasked to fill in the patients' information they got assigned daily to the filtration and isolation tracking database. They also conducted the aid distribution among the people who were in need and assisted the elderly and the people under the 'stay at home' orders. The principals who are above 60 years old especially indicated that the pandemic period and the assigned duties caused tiredness. The rest of the principals indicated they performed their duties as a bureaucratic responsibility. Below are the comments of the principals above 60 years old.

'I have been assigned to Vefa social assistance teams. I am a 60 years old person who is in the risk group. I had performed my duty, risking my health and wellbeing. We have distributed the aid and traveled back and forth 35 km without any financial compensation. They have abused the school principals and other Ministry of National Education personnel. We were doing the duties of the Ministry of Interior and Health, and we are compelled to do them. During the pandemic, these duties become an extra burden over our duties. (P19)'

'Currently, we are working way over our routine work hours. Even at 11-12 PM at night, we receive instructions, which causes more tiredness than the routine school period (P2).'

We are visiting the whole village, district by district. They have assigned me eleven different cases recently, which I performed, putting everything else I am supposed to do aside (P15)

Although principals over the age of 60 indicate this situation, it can be stated that the duties given to school principals during the pandemic increase their workload, endanger their health due to the assigned tasks, and their cognitive load increases during the planning of these tasks.

4.2.2.2. The Methods and Applications for Better Crisis Management and Less Damage to Institutions.

All of the participants thought there were methods and applications for better crisis management and less damage to institutions. Taking precautions and a crisis team are the main codes in this section. The nine codes emerged under this theme shown in Table 4.4.

P19, P18, P17, P16, P13, P2, and P4 thought that taking precautions is better for crisis management. They thought the most significant part of crisis management was before the crisis. Since taking precautions before the crisis may prevent crisis and provide minor damage. Some of the measures taken by P18 to prevent the crisis seem pretty radical. With the precautions, P2 tried to prepare the school for the pandemic and make the students' thoughts about the school positive. P4 took some precautions to protect the cleaning staff. P16 mentioned that cleaning supplies were donated to the schools with the contributions of the Provincial and District Directorates of National Education, Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, and the Governor. Participants said that:

I did not have a playground built in the schoolyard so that the children would not fall. Because I think it was a crisis, kids were falling off the slide at the previous school...When the school was first given to us, there were no bars on the windows. I thought that the children could fall out of the window. I just put bars on these windows. I averted the crisis. (P18)

Precaution and applying the rules ensure that crises are managed well, and the organization suffers less. (P13)

Schools were closed for six months, still at the moment. We disinfect the school; we do our cleaning. Why am I having my school painted so that the students can prepare for the school? When the student comes to school, he should say that my school is clean. (P2)

We had our staff clean the dormitory, school, and cafeteria. After disinfection, we sent 12 of our cleaning staff to their homes. In the beginning, the decision-making authority was entirely ours. It was later decided to send the staff home. We made these decisions two weeks before that decision. (P4)

Financial power is one of the effective methods for better crisis management and less damage to institutions. After starting distance education, the Ministry of

Education established TV Channels and made the EBA Platform more useful. It helps to less damage to MEB. However, the schools do not have financial power.

The Ministry of National Education started the distance education process very quickly. The pandemic started, the schools were closed. It never created the perception that education has stopped. The Ministry created this perception, As teachers, we are at the beginning of our duty. We are training, and even though we cannot do it in schools, we continue it remotely, even though we cannot do it face to face. Television channels were established. Infrastructure was created over EBA.(P10)

EBA TV was created. Three TV channels were opened for each school level, primary school, secondary school, and high school. In fact, when you look at this, it is the transformation of the crisis into an opportunity. That is, it is due to the good management of the process, and I think it was what our minister said. He said that we are one of the few countries that open a TV channel in this way. (P9)

I think that the good budget of the schools will be a big factor in reducing the contagion in this crisis. (P14)

Table 4.4

The Methods and Applications for Better Crisis Management and Less Damage to Institutions

Sub Theme	Code	Participants
The methods and applications for better crisis management and less damage to institutions	Crisis Team	P19, P3, P8
	Precautions	P19, P18, P17, P16, P13, P2, P4
	Orders coming from the chain	P5
	Financial power	P5, P6, P14, P2, P10, P9, P19
	Crisis planning	P2, P10, P17
	The competence of the school principal	P15, P6, P10
	The role of emotional state	P3, P7
	Opinion exchange	P2
	Stakeholders	P6, P11, P2, P12

The crisis team has seen the inevitable part of better crisis management and less damage by the participant. Their crisis team understanding covers all staff in school.

It is necessary to be prepared for the crisis, and it is necessary to form a team to manage the crisis. A single person cannot cope with the crisis, but a team can be successful. (P19)

I think that the most effective method is collective consciousness. In other words, I think that crises can be overcome much more quickly if everyone in any institution, from the school principal to the assistant principals, from the teachers to the personnel working at the school, prepares for this as a unit and coordinates. (P8)

The competence of the school principals is a code that is seen as imported code for experienced principals. P15 thought that the school principal intervenes with competence, experience, and knowledge in the crisis. P6 thought that better crisis management occurs with the individual difference of the person intervening in the event.

All stakeholders in a school gained importance during the COVID-19 crisis. P6, P2, P12, and P11 mentioned the importance of stakeholders. P6 said that the parents and the students should be part of the solution. P11 attached importance to getting the opinions of the stakeholders and stated that:

Regardless of the crisis, when you assign the stakeholders equally, benefit from the stakeholders equally and take their opinions, we can get rid of the crisis with the minor damage ... the decisions taken by a single person or the orders given by a single person do not lead to anything. (P11)

Damages to students and teachers of crises that are not managed well.

School principals are aware that poorly managed crises can harm teachers in many ways. Since COVID-19 is a crisis we are in and it affects people's health, six of our participants stated that a crisis that is not well managed could harm the health of the teacher and their family. Three of the participants mentioned physical damages such as injuries and accidents. Three of the participants stated that crises not managed well cause psychological problems. P1 stated that peace work is broken, teachers' work efficiency decreases, and this could damage teachers' work. P3 stated that the crisis not managed well causes anxiety, and this affects the learning environment. The example of the crisis which the school principal gave is related to the type of damages.

The past minister of national education had said that it would be straightforward to be the minister of national education if there were no teachers and students. We chose this easy way, we prevented the students from being harmed by keeping them away from the school, but this time the students were missing from education. I am a parent of three students, and I am also the school principal. I do not believe that my children are getting enough education, even though we have the technological opportunity to reach distance education... So I do not believe that distance education will be beneficial. (P11)

Participants stated that crises that are not managed well could harm students in different ways: the loss of Health, inadequate education, physical damage, accidents and injuries, psychological problems, and technology addiction. Nine participants stated that poor crisis management could push students out of education. Three of them stated that students do not have access to education, and they started working during the pandemic when the crises were not managed well, combined with the inequality of opportunity. Six participants stated that crises that were not managed well prevented the students from reaching the education level. Six of them mentioned that crises not managed well could harm students' health.

If the crisis is not managed well, if we think about the pandemic, it can cause serious health problems for students. (P10)

Two of our 12th-grade students were working in the peanut factory. I said you do not participate in distance education; you do not come to DYK (support training courses); what are you doing? They say they are working, and this will be finished by the end of October. At that time, olives harvest will start in November, and then it will continue until the first month, so not opening the school is the disadvantage of the student. (P11)

4.2.2.3. What Did School Principals Do in Crises To Ensure That Students and Teachers Were Not Harmed?

For crises other than the pandemic, school principals mentioned the different methods they used to protect students and teachers from being harmed. These methods are taking precautions, inspecting, immediate intervention, providing teachers' and students' confidence, and being fair.

I intervene immediately. The longer the resolution process, the more damage will occur. The worst decision is better than indecision. (P19)

If you can solve the case, people will not get hurt. When you cannot solve the crisis, the student, teacher, and parent in crisis will suffer. (P10)

Preventing crises before a crisis occurs and providing confidence if a crisis has occurred. (P13)

I try to take precautionary measures against such possible dangers and possible crisis issues to prevent them from being harmed. (P6)

In COVID-19, most participants explained that they implemented the decisions taken by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of National Education. However, they tried to make these rules suitable for their schools. All school principals mentioned the measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in their schools and the cleaning and hygiene efforts. It can be concluded that school principals tried to prevent students and teachers from being harmed by obeying the necessary rules and fulfilling the orders. Some school principals have developed different methods in this process, as they think that students will not be able to receive the necessary education due to the closure of the school. However, some of the participants made teachers use social media platforms effectively during distance education. They mentioned the importance of using social media and chat programs in the distance education of students. P7 and P18 preferred digital platforms to reach the students. P10 and P19, who are working in primary school, supported teachers to teach and control students face to face.

As administrators, we gathered and thought about what we could do in this process. As of March 13, we have established a separate system in our school. We finished our normal textbooks by the end of the year, just as if there was a face-to-face education. How did we finish this? We created WhatsApp groups, and we created a syllabus for WhatsApp groups. We continue like that right now. In these groups, our teachers give students their activities, share documents about the subject and get feedback from them again. (P7)

In the distance education process, especially the primary school principals made an effort to keep the students from leaving school and educational activities P10, P18, and P19 found different solutions to provide students' access to education.

P18 is working in a village. P18 finds an effective solution to reach the students while continuing distance education. This solution is highly effective and appropriate for primary school. P18 described the distance education process that students could not attend as a crisis and used social media actively and effectively to solve this crisis.

I support everything that is in the student's interest, and I will do it to the end. Because some children have computers, some do not. Some have the internet at home, and some do not have the internet at home. Also, since this is a village, children work outside all the time. One or two students attended distance

classes, sometimes not at all. This was a crisis for our school. I said, what shall we do, what shall we do? The best is to let us shoot videos. We request videos from our teachers and share them on our school's Instagram account. The number of followers of the account has exceeded 100. Most of them are our own students, and there are students and parents other than our own students; they follow our teachers' videos.... the teachers also share those videos in Whatsapp groups. Also, we use Instagram as a depository. (P18)

Almost half of the students at the school where P10 works are disadvantaged and Syrian students. P10 has come up with this solution to keep students reading and avoid dropping out of school.

Except for the 1st-grade teachers, other teachers are now doing their distance education from their homes. They only come once a week, and teachers change students' storybooks. They distribute different storybooks to their students and ask them to summarize them. They give homework to their students. (P10)

P19 is working in a small village school, and the internet access in this village is limited. Therefore, his solution is allowing teachers to do home visits.

In the summer, the teacher taught 2 or 3 students at school. Sometimes he went to students' homes. I gave permission to him. Education continued in the summer because the children did not have the educational background to pass to the next grade (3rd grade). (P19)

4.2.2.4. Crisis Plan.

It can be deduced that most of the school principals have prepared the crisis plans requested by the Ministry of National Education. The participants stated that there are crisis plans for various types of crises. Out of all participants, eight of them indicated that their schools have plans for earthquakes, eight of them for fire, three of them for sabotages, three of them for occupational safety, two of them for floods. Finally, two of the participants mentioned they have general emergency action plans. When we examine the statements of the school principals, it is seen that these plans are considered as documents. Some school principals think that these plans should be up to date. P18 and P16, who have much less experience as principals, did not have crisis plans for the current year. P11, on the other hand, is an experienced principal who argues that a crisis plan cannot be made before a crisis occurs.

There is no crisis plan. I do not think anyone uses it either because it is a crisis because of sudden events. (P18)

We have school crisis plans. More precisely, it exists as belonging to previous years. We have not made any plans to cover this year yet. (P16)

We do not have a specific crisis plan that we use at the time of the crisis; depending on the nature of the crisis, the decisions we take at the meeting constitute that plan. (P11)

Experienced school principals, P1 and P5, mentioned that all schools have crisis plans, but these should be kept up to date by the school administrators. They emphasized that since the circulation of teachers is high in this region, these plans should be checked by the school administration and that new teachers should be given duties.

In order to keep the plans up to date at the beginning of the semester, the names of the officers in the plans are changed according to the outgoing and incoming teachers, the names are communicated to the teachers and assigned.... Seminars are given if necessary. (P5)

All schools have plans. There are sabotage plans and precautionary plans. There is a possibility of any outside attack on the school, even a nuclear attack. There is a possibility of an earthquake. We have plans regarding these in our files. The most important thing here is that the school administration keeps them alive. I did this year, I integrated my new teachers into the process, and I informed them of their duties. I started the process and throughout this year because the teacher population is constantly changing... (P1)

Crisis Plan for COVID-19.

Considering the general situation of the participants, it is understood that no plan was made at the beginning of the process regarding COVID-19 and that the orders from the provincial and district health boards or the Ministry of National Education were implemented. Pandemic crisis planning in all schools except the Regional Boarding Middle School started in September 2020 before the students came to school.

The Deputy Manager of Regional Boarding Middle School stated that he had a crisis plan related to COVID-19. Four documents of this crisis plan in this school were sent to me at the end of the interview. Their school's administrative staff prepared The Infection Prevention and Control Action Plan for COVID-19 at the end of March 2020. This crisis plan came into effect on April 1, 2020. The Infection Prevention and Control Action Plan includes the precautions taken at school regarding COVID-19 and the establishment of the coronavirus preparation and enforcement

team. The duties of this team are also included in this section. On August 19, 2020, the school administration prepared the Cleaning and Disinfection Plan. There is a table about which part of the school will be cleaned, how often and by whom, and by whom the cleaning will be supervised in this plan. In addition, telephone numbers of individuals and institutions for pandemic emergency communication are also included in this plan. The school administration prepared a contagion Based Measures Action Plan on 10 August 2020, within the scope of occupational health and safety. The plan was revised on 17 August 2020. The administrative staff of Regional Boarding Middle School understood in advance that the pandemic was a crisis that required a crisis plan in school. The number of people working in this school is higher than in other schools, which may have pushed them to make a crisis plan.

When the first case of COVID-19 was seen in Turkey and schools were closed, school principals stated that they did not need a crisis plan because there were no students and implemented the plans of the Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Health, Provincial and District Hygiene Boards. On the other hand, some school principals did not make a crisis plan, thinking that the pandemic would be short-lived. P17 stated that:

Even though the schools were not open, we came as administrators. However, we did not make a plan at that moment, and maybe we thought it was temporary; we thought it would pass in a month or two months. After a long time, of course, we made a plan afterward. (P17)

The "Cooperation Protocol for the Improvement of Hygiene Conditions in Educational Institutions and the Prevention of Infection" between the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Industry and Technology was signed by Minister Ziya Selçuk and Minister of Industry and Technology Mustafa Varank (MoNE, 2020). Within the scope of this protocol, all schools applied for the My School: Clean certification by the Turkish Standards Institute (TSE) to bring hygiene standards to educational institutions. Crisis plans for the school began to be made after this protocol.

Ten of the participants said that they prepared crisis plans for the pandemic with the opening of the schools and in September. Four participants stated that the school pandemic crisis plan is mandatory for "My School is Clean" certification. During the data collection process, it can be said that a pandemic crisis plan was made in most of the schools. However, the school principals did not take the initiative but

prepared their crisis plans according to the draft plan from the Ministry of National Education and TSE.

Planning was done. We have prepared the plan for the My School: Clean Certification. We identified the risks at the school and processed the risks into the Mebbis system. You know, you need to plan to get my school Clean certificate. (P10)

There were draft plans sent to us by provincial and district national education directorates. Each school directorate looked at this draft plan, customized it according to their school, and prepared their plans. (P16)

There is a notice about the hygiene rules in Covid-19 sent by the ministry. Within the scope of that notice, there is a roadmap of approximately 160 pages. The ministry has a plan; what schools should do. Of course, by adopting that plan to the school, you already apply for a “My school's clean” certificate. You cannot apply without making a plan. (P7)

It can be stated that school principals are not as foreign to the crisis plan as they are to the crisis desk, but they do not think of creating a crisis plan for their schools without support or order from the higher authorities. It can be said that the roadmap from the Ministry of National Education is an example for them to create a pandemic crisis plan for their schools. Due to the centralized structure of the Turkish education system, it was observed that the crisis plans implemented in schools were prepared with notice or orders from the higher authority. School principals are also aware that the process is dynamic and that the decisions made by the higher authorities change according to the spread of the pandemic. However, they mentioned that this situation is not within the scope of a plan and that the Ministry of National Education can actually carry out a more planned process. P10 stated that:

The minister says that we will have difficulty in planning because we will not be able to see how the pandemic process will progress in two weeks, but I still think that we can manage a more planned process despite everything. These uncertainties can be further minimized. (P10)

4.2.3. Decision Making in School Crisis

4.2.3.1. The Factors Affecting Decision Making.

Bureaucracy.

Six of the participants thought that bureaucracy affects their decision positively. They mentioned that bureaucratic rules guided them while making decisions. There are two groups in there. Experienced school principals with 15 years or more administrative experience principles internalized bureaucracy. Therefore, they used to make decisions according to the bureaucracy. The other group consisted of school administrators with six years or less of administrative experience. They mentioned that bureaucracy helps them to make decisions. P9 mentioned that school principals have to give an account to a higher authority, and giving them information ensures the correct management of the crisis. P9 stated that: “It does not affect negatively, so why not inform your superiors, that is, the places you have to account for, negatively affect the process?”

P3 and P15 thought that decisions are made within the framework of the decisions made by the bureaucracy, taking into account the local dynamics of our school. P6 mentioned that bureaucracy affects decision-making, but schools’ conflicts could be solved with communication instead of bureaucracy. P6 stated that:

If there is no bureaucracy if everyone tries to set their own rules and each school sets their own rules, there will be a method in the field in more than one application.

P2 and P5 thought they did not have the right to judge and question the bureaucracy and higher authority; they followed whatever orders came. Similarly, P14 stated that school principals do not have decision-making authority and are responsible for maintaining the current order.

P1, P13, and P19 thought that the effect of bureaucracy on decision-making is sometimes positive and sometimes negative. P1 mentioned that bureaucracy makes a slow decision-making process. However, bureaucracy was needed to solve some crises.

We are always told that bureaucracy is bad, but it can actually work for us if we know how to use it. Some things are solved by bilateral relations. Some things are solved with bureaucracy. We overcame the crisis with the

transportation company with bureaucracy. I told you, bureaucracy is not actually a bad thing. (P1)

Eight of the participants thought that bureaucracy affects decision-making negatively. P10 emphasized that bureaucracy slowed down the decision-making process. In addition, bureaucracy decreases the principals' intervention capacity in the crisis. P15 mentioned that bureaucracy extends the duration of decision-making. For this reason, the crisis can spread. P15 said that he took risks in crises instead of waiting for bureaucracy.

The quote from P7 is significant about how bureaucracy affects decision-making in schools. In this quote, the crisis was solved directly instead of the chain of command.

When winter comes, the lack of coal in school is a crisis. I am responsible for the health of 500-600 students. It is my duty not to make them sick. I informed the authorities that we do not have coal. We temporarily borrowed coal from other schools, but it was not enough. The district is waiting for the correspondence from the province, and bureaucracy slows down the processes. I wrote to the WhatsApp group, which includes the governor of Gaziantep and the provincial director of national education, that there is no coal and that the students are cold at school. Sometimes low-level officers make everything seem perfect to their superiors. Senior officials may not be aware of the situation. This was a risk for me, as I usually do the necessary correspondence. I should have waited for the coal to arrive. On the same day, two tractors of coal temporarily arrived. Our problem was entirely resolved within three days. If you don't want to take risks, you can't achieve anything, so if I continued normally, coal would come after fifteen days. Children could get sick in 15 days. (P7)

P12 and P17 thought that bureaucracy could throw them out of focus. In the crisis process, the situations in which the school principals have to intervene can be revealed. P17 mentioned that bureaucratic procedures could not apply when there is a situation that will endanger the life safety of students. P12 emphasized that the school principal should intervene in the crisis instead of bureaucratic issues.

All participants mentioned that the decision-making authority changes according to the type and magnitude of the crises. Eight participants stated that decision-making authority is determined by hierarchy and chain from higher to lower authorities. Some participants pointed out that they could make minor changes during the implementation. In this section, the participants with less experience have provided different answers than the rest of the group. Two of the participants thought that the

person who is in close proximity to the crisis environment is a decision-making authority. Similarly, P13, a principal for three months, stated that the positive and negative aspects of the situation are considered to determine decision-making authorities.

Both P9 and P10 are experienced principals. P9 mentioned that the responsible person in a school is the principal, yet the school's guidance and psychological counseling teacher might be entitled to make decisions during psychological crises. As an example, P9 stated that the decision-making authority is the principal during an earthquake-related crisis. Furthermore, P10 stated that the solvability of the crisis depends on the authorities' management skills.

If the teacher has inadequate crisis-solving skills, even small-scale crises may lead to the involvement of school administration. Sometimes, the school administration might not be adequate, too. As the principal, I might solve the crisis in the school environment, yet in the case of my inadequacy regarding crisis-solving, I might have to involve higher authorities. (P10)

P14 and P19 have emphasized the meddling of higher authorities in even small-scale crises and stated that the school crises should be solved with all the school constituents without any external intervention.

Sometimes an inspector is assigned to solve the crisis in the school. When a crisis happens in school, somebody from that school should be assigned. (P19)

An institution should decide for itself during a minor crisis that only concerns itself. At least, I think the institution should have the authority to solve its crises. If a crisis may also affect external institutions, the local or higher authorities should decide. It should be a total, unanimous decision among all the authorities. (P14)

Decision-Making Authorities during COVID-19.

School principals stated that usually, they were not in the position of decision-maker during the pandemic. They indicated that the district administration also was not playing a big role in decisions, and they conducted the operations during the pandemic according to the letters of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, and Provincial and District Sanitation Boards. According to the participants' statements, the Ministry of Education made decisions, and local authorities just implemented these decisions.

For the LGS (High School Placement Exam), the ministry determined the classroom capacities and the needs of the students. The district authorities supplied the sanitary goods that would be distributed to the students. We have conducted the planning of the exam, classroom assignments, and cleaning in school. I believe the decisions are made according to the scope of authority (P1).

We are only responsible for carrying out the provincial administrations of the ministry. They are the decision-making mechanism, so we have to comply with the ministry's decision. (P6)

The Ministry of National Education currently manages the decision-making process. As the school principal, I realize that there are problems with online lessons, and these online courses cannot be done. I do not have the authority to decide that says I will invite children to my school and do face-to-face education. In other words, even if we see the problems related to education, we are not in a position to find solutions because the Ministry of National Education is the mechanism that can decide. (P10)

Six of the participants mentioned that the decisions during COVID-19 were made by the president, government, and ministers' council. This situation is appropriate for the centralized system in Turkey. In line with this situation, when the schools were closed for the first time due to COVID-19, this statement was made by the President's spokesman İbrahim Kalın instead of the Minister of National Education. Some participants said that this slowed their decision-making process. P4 stated that:

We are aware that a Turkey-wide decision should be made by the highest authority, the presidency, or the council of ministers. However, the fact that the Ministry of Health can only be able to advise without any authority causes some problems. For example, the Minister of National Education had to wait for the assembly of the council of ministers for the school closure decision. The school closure decisions are made or extended only when the council convenes. Every time, the council of ministers waited. I prefer that the Ministry of National Education has the right to make this decision. (P4)

Table 4.5*General and Local Authorities Stated by the Participants during COVID-19*

Sub Theme	Code	Participants
General Authorities	World Health Organization Science Board	P5
	Science Board	P15, P14, P9, P2
	Council of Ministers	P11, P10, P4, P2
	Government	P9, P2
	President	P2, P9, P4, P5
	Ministry of Health	P19, P15, P14, P10
	High Advisory Board	P15
	Ministry of Interior	P11
	Ministry of National Education	P13, P16, P15, P14, P12, P10, P6, P18, P11, P9, P6, P4, P1, P3
	Governor	P9, P3, P3
Local Authorities	Boards in governorship	P9, P14
	District Management	P17, P15, P12, P6, P3
	District National Education Directorate	P17, P8, P6, P3
	Provincial and District Sanitation Boards	P19, P18, P13, P14, P15, P16, P9, P5, P17, P16
In School	School Administrators	P17, P12, P8

Eight participants stated that the Science Committee of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Health acted as a decision-making authority during the pandemic. Participants thought that the decisions made by the scientific committee about the school should be consulted with the stakeholders of the school.

Because of the COVID-19, the Science Committee makes the decisions about the health issues, but the Committee also makes decisions concerning the situation in schools. However, the views and suggestions should have been collected from all of the constituents of the school environment, non-governmental organizations, local authorities of the Ministry of National Education, and similar institutions to make decisions (P2).

Locally, the district and provincial sanitation boards are seen as decision-making authorities for ten participants. During COVID-19, these boards made decisions related to the precautions in schools.

Obviously, school principals did not have the authority to make decisions during the covid-19 process. It was given to the provincial and district hygiene boards. The continuation of education in schools, how it should be continued, and within the scope of measures and measures to be taken at schools, provincial and district hygiene boards guided us, and they decided for us. (P16)

In the meeting held by the district national education, we did not take any extra decisions in any way. Existing decisions, the decisions taken by the provincial pandemic board, or the decisions taken by the ministry were shared. Their implementation was requested. (P14)

Almost all participants stated that the school principals did not have the authority to make a decision during COVID-19. They stated that the school principals obey and comply with the decisions from other authorities. They also stated that these decisions reached the school through the chain of command. The school principals stated that they only decide on the fine details of the implementation of these decisions and when there is an uncertain situation in the decisions coming from the higher authorities.

Via the chain. Whatever the decision was, it was implemented accordingly. In cases where fine details or the decision were not clear enough, we decided to implement it ourselves. (P18)

Inconsistency of the decisions.

The decisions of the Ministry regarding schools in rural areas were not clear, and the decision-making authorities had conflicting decisions, which made it difficult for school principals to make decisions. P13 mentioned that pandemic authorities and normal authorities made contrasting decisions; therefore, the decision-making became harder. Especially, primary school principals had difficulty planning in their schools because it was not certain which class group would come to school.

For example, the issue of opening schools, the Ministry of National Education explained that village schools would be opened. The bureaucratic rules, hierarchy ordered the school to open. According to the decisions of the Provincial Hygiene Board, each class should be arranged so that one student sits at each desk. The ministry defined that this should be done in the current

norms. There is a conflict of decisions between the decisions of the Provincial Hygiene Board and the decisions made by the ministry. We were stuck in a creek. We reported our situation to the higher authority. As a school, we abide by some of these rules, and we cannot abide by some others. We asked the District Directorate of National Education, and they could not say anything clearly. I did not open the school either. In other words, the ability to make decisions is a situation that occurs within the possibilities. If the real situation is suitable for making that decision, there is no problem. If the real situation is not suitable, we cannot act on assumptions. Physical facilities, teachers, and classrooms were insufficient for me to make a decision here. (P13)

There is a problem in the administration about the education process; maybe it stems from the process itself, we cannot foresee some things, everything becomes clear at the last moment, we have to decide something as soon as possible. If we are going to do distance education, we will set certain goals until the end of the year or the end of the term, and we will do distance education as follows. Likewise, if we are going to do it face-to-face, we need to determine in which classes we will do face-to-face education. Are we still going to open sophomores in two weeks? Can the fourth graders start face-to-face education after three weeks? I mean, these uncertainties make people too tired. The biggest problems in the process are uncertainties. Our Minister of National Education says that there is already uncertainty in the process itself. He says that we will have difficulty in planning because we will not be able to see how the pandemic process will progress in two weeks, but I still think that we can manage a more planned process despite everything. These uncertainties can be further minimized. (P10)

The closure of the school is also a crisis; I do not know what to do if the teachers teach at home. Since the 2nd graders were illiterate this year, teachers started teaching reading and writing again. The school is now closed again. We will try to find a solution. Participation in distance education is low. No internet, No computer, Not even TV. (P19)

4.2.3.2. Role of Instincts and Intuition in Decision Making.

Most participants said that they benefit from instincts and intuitions while making decisions. In this section, some key terms come forward. One of them is experience. Seven of the participants mentioned experience but said experience is affecting more than intuition while decision-making. P17 thought that experience and training made decisions more clear and made him more prepared for a crisis. The other one is conscientious. Some principals stated that they conscientiously made decisions.

Four of the participants define themselves as emotional person. Therefore, their decisions were affected by instinct and intuition. Four of the participants gave more

importance to bureaucracy instead of intuition. Two of them stated that they decide cognitively. Particularly, P2 stated that:

Suppose the laws are in such a way that no harm will come to me. In that case, I will act on my instincts, but if the law will harm me and its enforcement is strictly prohibited, you do not apply it but if the law is a bit open-ended, that is, if this is given to me as an authority, we try to do the right thing by using our instincts as the school principal, we apply whichever is the best. (P2)

P3 and P18 have administrative experience under six years. P3 and P18 stated that they try to control their intuitive behavior during decision-making. P18 and P5 consulted their vice-principal to decrease intuitive and emotional decisions.

The examples of how intuition affects the school principals decisions:

I worked in a neighborhood with a lot of substance abuse. Drug addicts were always in the school, and we were constantly calling the police. They could not come on every phone. There may be something you need to intervene in at that moment. A civilian entered our school with a knife. We thought it would harm the student, of course. As soon as we learned this, we immediately started looking for him in the corridors, and then, of course, we found him. When he noticed us, he immediately went out. Even though I'm not a security guard normally, we just chased him, even though I didn't have anything to resist, and I think he ran away with that psychology. We chased him all the way to the neighborhood. In other words, there is no procedure for this, completely for the safety of the students. I was the assistant principal at that time, the teacher or the administrator could throw himself in front of them so that nothing happens to the children(P17)

For example, in a high school in Izmir, the father of a student came to school with a rifle and shot the school principal. For example, think that you are the deputy principal or a teacher in that school, there is an event resulting in death during educational activities. Under those circumstances, a person may not think or act rationally. It is possible that the person may act instinctively to stop the situation and act against it since his or her friend or colleague or the principal is hurt. (P12)

4.2.3.3. Time Pressure and Risks.

Emotions under time pressure and risks.

In this study, most participants define feelings under time pressure and risks. 11 of the 19 participants stated that they feel stress under time pressure and risks. They used different words such as stress, tension, pressure, experience hardships to define stress. The majority of school principals who feel stress and feelings related to stress

have more than ten years of experience. The other two participants in this group have two years or less experience in school administration. Five participants stated that they feel fear under time pressure and risks.

Almost half of the participants identified time pressure and risks in crisis as factors that affect the decision-making of principals. Three of the participants mentioned that they felt nervous, and five of the participants emphasized that they feel anxiety, panic, and fussiness. P1 and P10 defined that they feel anger under time pressure and risk. P14 and P15, having experience in administration for over 18 years, stated that they feel sadness. Similarly, P12 stated that he would feel pessimistic when there were time pressure and risk factors. P18 felt bewildered and uneasy in that situation. P8 emphasized that he gets a feeling of inadequacy.

Most of the participants thought that time pressure and risks affected their decision-making process. Time pressure and risks affected eight of them negatively. Some of them said that they have cognitive overload in this situation, which prevents them from making better decisions. Mistakes and wrong decisions can be observed in a crisis with time pressure and risks. They also chose the easiest decision. P17 stated that:

In other words, I can take actions to eliminate it as quickly as possible, most effectively, at least for the moment, and then reduce its effect, but in the event of a crisis, I must first intervene in the crisis so that I can overcome the crisis in cold blood and calmly with the least damage. There will be excitement and fuss in this again. I think that it is necessary to be in a structure that can do this at a minimum level. Everyone can be excited, everyone can have fear, but in the first place, to be able to stop it in moments of crisis. I think the need to intervene to prevent that first destructive effect. (P17)

In the administration, if things go well, there is no problem. However, if the situation worsens, you are responsible. There are repercussions up to suspension of the administrative role or demotion. Problems occur in a country if the rewards and punishments are not distributed equally. (P19)

P4 said that risks and time pressure make him uneasy. In that situation, he could not use any plan and forget the rules and the learnings about the earthquake. The major risk of a crisis is emotional instability. It leads to cognitive load, which prevents making a proper decision.

We prepare the plan for an earthquake, we make earthquake drills in our house, but when the earthquake occurs, we behave like amateurs. I experienced this situation during Elazig Earthquake. Instead of protective and available areas, we hid under the table or behind the sofas. I think The time

pressure makes me uneasy and deletes everything we learn. I feel like this. I have experienced this situation myself. The lack of time makes me uneasy, and I forget all the rules. (P4)

P13 and P18 mentioned that time pressure prevented thinking about all aspects of the crisis. P18 also emphasized that time pressure created stress.

It affects me negatively. I could not make the correct decision that I needed. I can miss the sub-conditions and alternatives. (P13)

Time pressure increases stress. When time is extended, you start to think about all aspects. However, when the time was limited, you could not do it. (P18)

The infrastructure is not suitable for distance education; tablets will be given to schools. When I examine the students from villages, 95 percent of them depend on agriculture. They have to work, and they will do distance education; how will they do it now? (P15)

4.3. Summary

The results are reached through both descriptive and content analysis of the interviews conducted with 19 school principals in a district of Gaziantep. During the course of interviews, the interviewees were generally relaxed and provided their answers in detail, except for the times where some interviewees missed the topic. The main themes arisen during the interviews are the interpersonal relations as crisis causes, the local problems of rural schools and the threats due to the transported education system, and the effect of bureaucracy on the initiative. The interviewees seemed divided in terms of their thoughts on the effect of bureaucracy. While some principals stated, they had acted passively in accordance with bureaucratic orders, while some principals acted proactively or sometimes in defiance of the bureaucratic orders when they had to.

The first theme of the study is crisis perception of the principals, with three subthemes of how the principals define the crisis, their crisis examples, and why the pandemic is a crisis. In the crisis definitions of principals, the most frequent codes were nonroutine, unexpected events, and extraordinary situations. When they are asked about the types of crises they can exemplify, the COVID-19 pandemic was shared by the majority of the principals, alongside school closures and natural disasters. Interpersonal conflicts are also given by a quarter of the participants, which differs from the other prominent codes. The participants think that the COVID-19

pandemic is an example of a crisis, but with different reasons such as its broad impact, or the severe effect on education only, while some principals emphasized the nonroutine and unexpected nature of the pandemic. Regarding crisis management, the emerged subthemes are crisis plans, crisis desk, methods for managing the crisis, and applications for better crisis management. It appears that there is no committee that is officially designated as crisis desk, but executive guidance and counseling committees or similar disciplinary committees are shown as examples of crisis desks. Regarding the presence of a crisis desk for COVID-19, half of the participants mentioned they were not involved in any crisis desk, while the rest were not sure about the nature of the meetings and activities done on the pandemic that constitutes a crisis desk.

Regarding the roles and methods of the principals during the COVID-19 crisis, three-quarters of the participants had assumed responsibilities in the pandemic management assigned by the higher authorities. The overall consensus about these responsibilities is the increased workload, increased health risks, and increased cognitive load, while these duties are usually performed with no or little compensation. Regarding the methods and applications for better crisis management, when the participants asked, they emphasized crisis teams, precautions, and financial power. When they were asked about the consequences of a mismanaged crisis, participants stated that the physical and psychological health of the students might be affected. Other remarks are the decrease in work efficiency, disruption of the learning environment, and problems that can cause a student to drop out. Against such harmful effects during COVID-19, most participants stated they followed the guidance given by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of National Education. Furthermore, some participants indicated they developed various methods to minimize the effects of distance education, such as using social media and online chat platforms, home visits, and using storybooks for the first grade.

According to the participants, most of the principals prepared crisis plans requested by the Ministry of National Education in the form of documentation. Some of the participants stated that these plans are not updated and claimed that it is impossible to make a plan before a crisis, and thus they prepare during the crises. Specifically for COVID-19, only one school has stated they prepared a pandemic crisis plan before the new academic year starts. The plans were only prepared as the mandatory requirement for the school hygiene certificate program. Overall, it can be

seen that the principals are somewhat knowledgeable regarding crisis desks and crisis planning, yet no action is taken until a request has come from higher authorities.

On the second research question of the study, the decision-making process is analyzed. When the factors affecting their decision-making are asked to the participants, six of them stated that bureaucratic decisions and guidelines are a huge factor. The perception of the bureaucracy regarding decision-making varies among the principals positively or negatively. When the decision-making authorities are asked, almost half of the participants stated the importance of higher authorities, while some participants emphasized that small-scale crises should be solved within the school. The majority of the participants indicated that the major authorities during the pandemic are the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Health in general and provincial and district-level sanitation boards locally. They stated that the principals did not play a huge role in decision-making during the pandemic and were responsible for conducting the decisions. However, they also pointed out the inconsistencies and contrasts among the decisions taken by the Ministry of National Education.

When it comes to the role instincts and intuition play in their decisions, some patterns emerged. While inexperienced principals stated that they depend less on instincts and intuition and instead discuss the decisions with their deputies and other experienced colleagues. The experienced principals stated their experience and training prepared them well, while some principals also added the role of their conscience. When the participants are asked about the emotions they feel under time pressure and risks in a crisis, more than half of them accept that they feel stress under such conditions. The majority of the participants who stated that they felt stressed were experienced principals. Furthermore, the principals stated that the time pressure and risks affected their decision-making process in the ways of cognitive overload, emotional instability, and stress-related feelings.

To conclude, the main themes that arose in the course of these studies are summarized. The crisis perception and the crisis management knowledge of the 19 principals that participated are analyzed. Then the study continued by addressing the decision-making process followed by them. These themes are analyzed in the context of COVID-19 as a hot, ongoing example. The next section will analyze these findings in accordance with contemporary literature.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, two research questions of the study will be discussed. Discussions and implications will be shown regarding the results of the study. Subsequently, implications for theory, research, and practice will be presented. Finally, the limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

In this chapter, discussions and implications are presented regarding the results of the study. A brief summary of the results of each research question combined with the literature review and previous research is done together with a discussion of the results and implications for theory, practice, and methodology. The suggestions for future studies are also indicated.

5.1. Discussion

The main purpose of this study is to enlighten the perceptions of the school principals about the concept of crisis and how school principals make decisions under crises like pandemics. More specifically, it is aimed to discover the decision-making approaches of the school principals in crisis. The present study was designed as qualitative research since the primary concern of the study is to explore how school principals perceive crises and how they make decisions in a crisis. To answer the research questions, the data retrieved from semi-structured interviews conducted with 19 participants who are the school principals in one of the districts of Gaziantep were analyzed.

5.1.1. Crisis Perception of the School Principals

In this part, the findings for the first research question, “How the school principals perceived the crisis?” will be discussed. In order to understand their crisis perception, school principals were asked about their definition of crisis. The majority of school principals defined crisis as a nonroutine, extraordinary situation and unexpected events. Other prominent codes were acute problems and events and subject pending resolution. One of the findings is that school principals see crises as events that disrupt the normal functioning and routine of the school. These definitions are similar to Brock’s definition of crisis. A crisis is defined as sudden, uncontrollable, and unexpected events with widespread effects and high consequences (Brock, 2002). The school crisis is specifically defined as traumatic events involving school-related uncertainty, complexity, and urgency, independent of occurrence inside or outside of the school (Krauss, 1998; Seeger, 2002; Pearson & Clair, 1998; Simola, 2005; Liou 2014). This definition matches with the principals’ opinions, where they see school crises as acute problems that disrupt the normal functioning of the school in an unexpected way. On the other hand, school principals did not distinguish between the crises inside and outside of the schools while defining the school crisis. Based on their examples, it can be said that the majority of the participants see school crises as mostly happening in schools.

To understand their perception of the crisis, the school principals were asked to provide examples of the crisis. The majority of school principals exemplified the pandemic as a crisis. School closure, which is related to the pandemic, is also seen as a crisis example by school principals. Natural disasters, accidents, and health problems were the other crisis examples for the school principals. When the school principals’ crisis examples are examined, it is seen that they overlap with their definitions of crisis. Crises such as pandemics, the closing of schools, natural disasters are unexpected and nonroutine events as stated by school principals in their definitions of crisis. More than half of the participants defined the crisis as “outside the routine.” The reason participants described the crisis as an extraordinary event could be related to the conditions of the current pandemic. Participants who described the crisis as an extraordinary event pointed to the pandemic and school closures as examples of crisis. In addition to these, the school principals working in schools where the number of

students and teachers is high tend to see interpersonal conflict as a crisis. Since these school principals are exposed to interpersonal conflicts much more than others. Dos and Comert's (2012) list about the causes of the crisis also includes the loss of harmony and interpersonal conflicts as a cause of the crisis.

The data were collected at a time when the spread of the pandemic was constantly changing, and decisions from top authorities on education were changing rapidly. Therefore, the principals' opinions related to why the pandemic was a crisis were considerably different from each other, although experienced school principals provided a broader perspective for pandemic as a crisis by stating that the COVID-19 pandemic affected every field and education was one of these fields. Especially, the principals working in villages and low-income neighborhoods mentioned that there is a lack of technological infrastructure for remote education. According to research done in the USA, rural schools have more difficulty in the global pandemic (Hayes et al, 2021). Inequalities and inadequacies in some rural schools have come to the fore in COVID-19. For example, it was revealed that there was a lack of internet infrastructure during the pandemic (Koy Okullari Degisim Agi, 2021). School principals mentioned the lack of internet access, as well as the difficulty of motivating students in this process. In a study on rural areas in Turkey, the rate of those who can access distance education is 48.1%, while the rate of those who cannot reach it is 45.2% (Koy Okullari Degisim Agi,2021). Furthermore, school principals pointed out that distance education is not sufficient to support the students' social development and to reinforce positive behavior. These findings indicate that the challenges faced are much different in rural schools where even the basic needs are not being met, so the scope of the crisis is also different, and the inequalities are further exacerbated. Often the problems faced are beyond the control of the principals leading to high rates of students without access to distance education.

In addition, experienced school principals mentioned difficulties related to remote education. In remote education, class management was getting harder, and student performance and participation were decreasing because of the lack of infrastructure for it and the socioeconomic situations (Korlu et al., 2021). In the absence of internet access, computer, laptop, or even TV, low-income households' children, and youth could not benefit from remote education enough (Yildiz & Vural, 2020). In 2020, one of the experienced school principals stated that all of the students

passed to the next grade class without being included in any measurement and evaluation, and some of them graduated. In this study, school principals emphasized not only the academic development of students but also their social development. These findings pointed that pandemic affected not only the academic development itself but also the measurement of the outputs of education.

It can be concluded that experienced school principals better observe the problems that arise during the crisis and examine the problems more comprehensively. In this process, what they can do as a school principal is limited, as they do not have sufficient financial power and authority in cases such as the lack of internet infrastructure or the lack of technological tools. According to the PISA 2018 survey, 24.1% of students are without an internet connection at home, and 33.3% of students do not have a computer that they can use for school work in Turkey (OECD,2019). For this reason, it is not only at the initiative of the school principal to solve many problems caused by the pandemic. It is seen that some of the solutions put into practice by the Ministry of National Education are insufficient throughout the country. In this process, the Ministry of National Education did various practices to support the education of students. EBA TV was launched, and students who did not have internet access at home were provided with the opportunity to learn. Inexperience in distance education affected this process. In the study, school principals stated that EBA TV and online lessons assisted the students in COVID-19. Furthermore, the Ministry of National Education signed an agreement with major telecommunications operators for free access to the online EBA (Educational Informatics Network) platform. However, this free access did not include the online teleconference systems where the majority of online courses are held (Turk Telekom; Vodafone; Turkcell, 2020). The lack of technical infrastructures and technological deficiencies could not be solved by the school principals only.

5.1.2. Crisis Management

5.1.2.1. Crisis desk.

The crisis desk is an essential part of the crisis management process. Based on the variety of answers in this section, it is possible to say that school principals'

understanding of crisis desks is different from each other. We can list the formations that school principals define as crisis desks in crises other than pandemics as follows: occupational health and safety committee, guidance committee, formation similar to the disciplinary committee, and meeting with teachers. It is seen that the crisis desk understandings of school principals overlap with the crisis example. For example, it is seen that the school principal, who gives the example of a psychological crisis, thinks of the guidance and psychological counseling committee as the crisis desk.

School principals tend to consider the meetings they attended during COVID-19 as a crisis desk as well. They were assigned by the district governor's office in filiation teams and VEFA social support groups. Some of them defined the meetings, which are related to filiation teams, and VEFA social support groups, as a crisis desk. Their duties in the filiation team and VEFA social support group increased their workload and their cognitive load. They expressed the information meeting held on how the exams will be implemented and what measures will be taken as a crisis desk. All of these findings revealed that school principals do not know the structure of the crisis desks. It has been found that they define the meetings held to be assigned to them during the pandemic as the crisis desk. From this point of view, it can be concluded that school principals have insufficient knowledge about the purpose and effectiveness of the crisis desk. According to Kerr and King (2018), a team that forms the crisis desk should possess the skills that are needed in a crisis, should be able to work and communicate well, and should know the community that the school belongs. They should also continuously strive to improve themselves for better crisis response. There should be a clear division of responsibility, including a single person that directs the communication internally and externally. According to these criteria, it can be easily stated that none of these criteria is fully and deliberately satisfied by the schools in this study. The Occupational Health and Safety Committee is used as a crisis prevention tool by the school principals, including the intervention teams. The rest of the examples are temporary committees or conventions to solve the problems on the road. Until now, there is no evidence that these committees meet routinely pre-crisis to get trained and prepare the necessary plans. These findings may state that there is a lack of permanent desks, teams, or organizations that may prepare and plan for future crises from the local to the nationwide level. The lack of preventive mechanisms is a

threatening factor to schools, where even a small crisis may have large consequences if it is mismanaged.

In the school committees, there is not a clear division of responsibility. Usually, the responsibility falls on the school principal only, and the principal assigns other people according to his discretion, without any objective criteria. In this research, occupational health and safety committees are the closest things to the crisis desk since they meet routinely outside of a crisis and follow the general plans mandated by the government. These plans seem to be not updated and adapted to the local setting.

In summary, the majority of the participants stated that they were not involved in the crisis desk. Most of them did not think that the crisis desk was required. The school principals needed an order or a notice to establish a crisis desk in their school. For this reason, the Ministry of National Education and the provincial directorates affiliated with the Ministry should inform the school principals about the importance of the crisis desk in crisis management and encourage them with supporting examples. School principals mentioned that there are committees that can replace crisis desks in schools if not for the pandemic. They stated that the organization of these committees is well documented but that the important thing is to update these committees. In the pandemic, the committees similar to the crisis desk have been prepared in schools in order to apply for the My School: Clean certificate. As it turns out, schools need the order, notice, or support of the Ministry of Education to set up a crisis desk. The Ministry of National Education should support the establishment of crisis desks in schools in crisis situations. Actually, it should be mandated actually all schools should be required to have a crisis desk, especially in Turkey where there is an influx of refugees and immigrants and the economic crisis, social and political instabilities.

5.1.2.2. Methods and Applications for Better Crisis Management.

Participants thought that there are methods and applications for better crisis management and less damage to the institution. The majority of the participants mentioned that precautions are the best method because the crisis may be prevented. The problem with this finding is that some school principals tend to take extreme precautions. For example, a participant said that they refused to build a playground for the newly built school because the children might get injured on the playground. In this case, there might be alternative precautions. According to Grissom and Condon

(2021), school administrations should conduct effective risk assessments. Grissom and Condon (2021) emphasizes that while assessing risks and safety issues, they should familiarize themselves with the students and the community and increase their preparedness with clarity and transparency towards the students and the rest of the community, and also be open to feedback. When an extreme precaution is taken as aforementioned, it may cause trust and friction between the school administration and the students, and the community. It is very important that the school principal's reactions to crises are not trial-like wrong actions (Aksoy & Aksoy,2003). Instead of eliminating the possible cause of the crisis, whether it is beneficial or not, more constructive and protective solutions can be found. Some participants gave examples related to COVID-19 prevention. The prevention phase of the crisis aims to eliminate the risk to life and property. (Kerr & King,2018). The principals suggested the following actions for better crisis management: connecting with stakeholders, forming an effective crisis team, good crisis planning, and the competence of the school principals.

A number of participants emphasized financial power as a method for better crisis management and less damage to the institution. The financial strength of the Ministry of National Education enabled them to get through the transition to distance education without damaging the institution too much. Some principals stated that the Ministry of National Education had preserved its reputation thanks to EBA TV, EBA Platform, and distance education provided by teachers. However, the budget of the schools was not enough to fight against the pandemic. School principals mentioned that reducing the contagion depends on a budget of the school. Almost in the middle of the data collection process, cleaning supplies and masks started to be distributed from the district directorate of National Education, provincial Directorate of National Education, Metropolitan Municipality, and governorships. According to Korlu et al. (2021), the Ministry of National Education has allocated 28.60 TL per student in high schools in 2020 for pandemic precautions, while an average of 7636 TL per student is allocated for all the yearly needs of the schools. Only a limited number of tablet computers are distributed based on socioeconomic disadvantages of the students but also considering the academic success (Korlu et al., 2021). When these are considered together with the reported problems of access to online education, indicating that the MEB was ill-prepared for the COVID-19 crisis In order to understand this better, a

study in the United States showed that to bridge the knowledge gap of the students caused by the pandemic over two years, an extra 2500\$ per student needs to be allocated for a one-year intensive education program (Dorn et al., 2020).

5.1.2.3. Harms of Mismanaged Crises and Coping Strategies.

Participants mentioned that teachers could be harmed in various ways in crises that are not managed well. The teachers and their families may lose their health, get physical damage like injuries and accidents and have psychological problems and lose their jobs. For example, the participants stated that anxiety also affects the learning environment. Furthermore, the incidents of technological addiction among the students are reported by the principals. Another problem is that the students who were unable to attend educational activities were compelled to work in agricultural or other jobs to help their families. It is observed that there is an increased gap between working students and their peers from higher socioeconomic status (Koy Okullari Degisim Agi, 2020). Thus, the school principals have used various methods to involve the students in education, especially in the schools where there is a low ratio of attendance to educational activities. One of the principals used an Instagram account to share educational videos prepared by the teachers when it is reported that the attendance is very low. Thus, the students were able to follow their teachers when they were unable to attend online classes. Similarly, WhatsApp messaging apps are used by teachers to share similar videos. It can be observed among the principals that they were surprised when schools were closed suddenly. The educational activities in their schools were nonroutine until September 2020. One participant whose school is one of the first schools that continues routine educational activities asked the teachers to send educational materials to the students over WhatsApp from the beginning of the pandemic until the end of the academic year. Another principal said that they started a system where the students come and exchange their storybooks one day a week and were given study sheets by their teachers. In a village with scarce internet access, another principal let their second-grade teachers continue classes with groups of 2-3 students to prepare the students for third-grade during summer. To conclude, the principals have employed different special strategies to keep their students in educational activities during the hardships of the pandemic. Similar stories are

reported in other studies done over the pandemic (Korlu et al., 2021; Koy Okullari Degisim Agi, 2020; Keles et al., 2020; Ozdogru,2021).

5.1.2.4. Crisis plan.

It can be understood that the Ministry of National Education is mandating school administrations to have plan documents against some of the possible crises, including sabotage and nuclear attacks and natural disasters, and the committees that will be formed during the crisis. It is observed that lesser experienced principals did not prepare a crisis plan at the initial stages of the pandemic since they did not feel necessary during the school closures. The experienced school principals emphasized that every school should have a crisis plan that is periodically updated. Yet, in practice, only one school prepared a crisis plan against the COVID-19 pandemic among the participants. The documents prepared by the local boarding school seem to be in detail according to the content analysis. However, this plan is prepared in the scope of occupational health and safety requirements, and the aforementioned school has twelve janitor employees since it is a boarding school. So, it is possible that the pandemic crisis plan is prepared to fulfill the occupational health requirements mandated for the employees. The rest of the school principals stated that they prepared pandemic crisis plans in late August and early September. During this period, the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Science and Industry and Technology agreed on a hygiene certification plan for the schools that will be conducted by the Turkish Standards Institute (TSE) (Korlu et al., 2021). Among the requirements of the certificate, a pandemic crisis plan was a must, compelling the rest of the schools to prepare the plan for certification. Some principals stated that due to local health and sanitary board decisions, they did not prepare crisis plans. They pointed out that all the decisions were coming from the central administration, yet the decisions were changing quickly. They accepted that the pandemic is a dynamic situation that necessitates quick decisions, yet the Ministry of National Education should have conducted a clearer and planned pandemic process to avoid ambiguities in implementations. This ambiguity is stated by various school principals all over Turkey during the pandemic process in other reports and studies and reported that this caused a loss of trust and confusion among the school administrations and the students

and their parents (Korlu et al., 2021; Koy Okullari Degisim Agi, 2020; Keles et al., 2020; Ozdogru, 2021).

5.1.3. Decision Making in Crisis

The principals listed the factors affecting their decisions as bureaucracy and higher authorities, inconsistencies in the authority decisions, time pressures and risks, and finally, instincts, intuitions, and their experience. Mutch (2015) highlighted that the successful principals in crises are the ones who utilize their dispositional qualities and experiences, alongside their relational skills and the community sense they built over time while meeting the situational needs well-thought but in a flexible way. Bakioglu and Demiral (2013) also emphasized that the time pressures and ambiguities caused by the bureaucracy can affect the decision-making of the principals. Some school principals stated that bureaucracy could positively affect their decisions. These school principals are either experienced with 15 years of duty or with experience below six years and struggling with decision making. Some school principals stated that variation among the rules and practices of different schools when the bureaucracy is absent is a negative situation. Some principals indicated that it is their duty to obey the orders of higher authorities as it is. On the other hand, there are some participants that have mixed opinions of bureaucracy. These participants stated that the effectiveness of bureaucracy depends on the situation, which solves the crisis in a chain of command instead of local responsibility. However, some participants claimed that this chain of command slows the crisis management efforts and sometimes even causes a deadlock. Turkey has one of the most centralized countries when it comes to school administration, where 72.9% of the decisions are taken at the central level, while the OECD average is around 40% (Korlu et al., 2021). It seems that the highly centralized system itself serves as an obstacle for dealing effectively with a crisis such as the pandemic, highlighting the need to examine the problem at the system level.

The Participatory Management Model focuses on the importance of motivation and structures the organization around motivation. The model postulates that when the organization is formed according to employee needs, it leads to high worker productivity (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2021). McGregor (1960) focuses on the fact that most managerial action results from managers' assumptions about their subordinates.

These contrasting sets of assumptions are explained with Theory X and Y. Theory X assumes that people dislike work, so they must be coerced, controlled, directed, and threatened. In contrast, Theory Y assumes that commitment to objectives is a function of rewards for achievement, and people accept and seek responsibility under appropriate conditions (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2021). In this study, we can say that school principals' superiors approached them with Theory X assumptions. This fear mechanism has consequences that are detailed in the following section.

Due to the fear mechanism explained by Theory X, some school principals state that sometimes low-level officers make everything seem perfect to their superiors, and senior officials may not be aware of the situation. For example, in a crisis, a struggling school principal finds the solution by asking in a WhatsApp group where the governor and the local director of National Education is also a member. The crisis is solved afterward, yet an investigation is started against the school principal since the principal appealed to the highest authority without following the hierarchy. According to this finding, when the health and safety of the students is the issue, some principals do not hesitate to act under the risk of repercussions. Another principal stated that being an administrator has lots of burdens, yet there are no rewards. Bakioglu and Demiral (2013) state that if a civil servant uses an authority that is not given or not in the description of duty, taking the initiative and taking these actions that are not part of the job description could be problematic. It could even be considered as a crime; thus, this situation causes inaction of the principals usually. For example, it is inconvenient for people who have not received first aid training to engage in first aid practices (Inan et al., 2011). The same pattern is seen in the works of Dos and Comert (2012). It should be pointed out that such a theme is not emphasized in international studies for the most part. Given the fact that the school administrations are responsible for taking only 8.3% of the decisions in Turkey, according to the report of Korlu et al. (2021), the hesitations of the school principals regarding authority are understandable.

When the participants were asked whether they use their instincts and intuitions, seven of them indicated that they value the experience more than intuitions regarding their decisions. The school principals have stated that they had taken precautions, done necessary assessments, and reached quick decisions in order to prevent any harm to the students and the teachers. They emphasized that making quick

decisions according to the initial findings of the crisis is better than indecisiveness since if they fail to solve the crisis, it will bring harm to the students, teachers, and the parents. This statement is in accordance with the principles of the naturalistic decision-making model (NDM). NDM focuses on the real-world contexts that are meaningful to the decision-maker (Lipshitz et al., 2001). According to NDM, the decisions are made using instincts and experience instead of rational approaches (Lipshitz et al., 2001). In the NDM, the decision options are selected according to their compatibility with the ongoing crisis and the decision maker's values (Klein, 1998; Dionne et al., 2018). It can be seen that the school principals are emphasizing the naturalistic view while making decisions.

The process from the beginning of the COVID-19 process to the closure of schools for the first time worked as follows. The Ministry of National Education made the first information about COVID-19 on the MEB website on February 3, 2020 (MoNE, 2020). The information included correct hand washing and precautions for respiratory tract infections, and posters containing this information were prepared for students, teachers, and parents. On February 26, from the social media accounts of the Ministry of National Education, "How do we protect ourselves from the coronavirus?" The video title has been released. Minister of National Education Ziya Selçuk announced that information on how to provide hand hygiene and how to protect against viruses is given by teachers in schools (MoNE, 2020). In a notice sent to the provinces on March 10, 2020, students, teachers, and personnel affiliated with the Ministry of National Education were asked not to travel abroad unless it was compulsory. On March 11, 2020, the first official COVID-19 case was shared with the public. On March 12, 2020, social events in public and private schools and institutions were canceled within the scope of COVID-19 (MoNE, 2020). It started on March 12, 2020, with the announcement that there will be a one-week holiday starting from March 16 in K12 institutions, and that distance education will be started from the Internet and television channels as of March 23 (TEDMEM, 2021). In any of the posts and documents made by the Ministry of National Education until that day, there was no information that schools could be closed. The school closing decision is a clear violation of the guideline about the importance of the clear communication of decisions in a crisis (Kerr & King, 2018; Grissom & Condon, 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the school administrators also had to obey the notices coming from new authorities such as the Provincial and District Sanitation Board, Science Board Council of the Ministry of Health. The instructions from these new authorities caused conflicts with the orders and regulations of the Ministry of National Education, especially on the reopening conditions of the schools. Furthermore, the delays and suddenness of the school closure decisions taken by the highest authority, the Presidency or the Council of Ministers caused further confusion and trust issues among the parents and the school administrations (Korlu et al., 2021). When different authorities contradict their decisions, it is observed that the school principals do not make risky decisions. Bakioglu and Demiral (2013) showed that under ambiguity, the principals tend to involve their colleagues or try to find prior examples. As stated before, a minority of principals take the initiative at the expense of the danger of investigation. The majority of them, though take the inaction and wait for the situation to revert to routine.

Under time pressure and risk, participants stated that they feel stress and emotions related to stress. Five participants added that they also feel panic and fear. The majority of the participants stated that the time pressure prevents them from thinking about all aspects of a crisis, which is especially emphasized by the inexperienced participants. Bakioglu and Demiral (2013) listed similar factors affecting the decision-making negatively, such as fear, emotions, sense of urgency, tiredness, over and underconfidence, and fears. In Bakioglu and Demiral's study, some of the female participants stated that their emotions affect them to make wrong decisions. The only female participant in our study had a similar comment, adding that she also consults with her male deputies.

5.2. Implications for Theory

According to the participants, the school crisis is defined as nonroutine, extraordinary situations, and unexpected events. Also, it is mentioned that school crises are identified by acute problems and events and subject pending resolution. One of the findings is that school principals see crises as events that disrupt the normal functioning and routine of the school. The responses of the principals in the study are completely aligned with prior definitions on the school crises, where it is defined as

traumatic events involving school-related uncertainty, complexity, and urgency, independent of occurrence inside or outside of the school (Krauss, 1998; Seeger, 2002; Pearson & Clair, 1998; Simola, 2005; Liou 2014).

Operating the daily practices in a school involves a lot of uncertainty and complexity for a school principal (Liou, 2014). For this purpose, chaos and complexity theories are employed to understand crises that require a dynamic point of view (Liou, 2014; Liou, 2015). The responses of the principals show that usually, there is not any crisis progressing linearly. The involvement of external parties and the ambiguity caused by the central administration causes disruptions in crisis management and even exacerbates the current crisis. Furthermore, the principals mentioned the huge problems caused by the communication problems in the course of the pandemic crisis. The chaos theory puts a big emphasis on crisis communication and states that miscommunication can cause bifurcation events in the crisis (Seeger, 2002). Thus, the school crises should be analyzed in terms of the recent crisis chaos and complexity theories.

For decision-making in crisis, there are two main approaches according to the role of emotions. Sweeny (2008) postulates that there is a logical progression in decision-making where enough information is collected and processed according to their effectiveness, emotional response, and the damage to the institution and the reputation to find the best answer. However, this process might be affected by the emotions and biases of the decision-maker (Dionne et al., 2018). On the other hand, the naturalistic decision-making model focuses on the real-world contexts that are meaningful to the decision-maker (Lipshitz et al., 2001). According to NDM, the decisions are made using instincts and experience instead of rational approaches (Lipshitz et al., 2001). In the NDM, the decision options are selected according to their compatibility with the ongoing crisis and the decision maker's values; thus the decision does not have to be perfect (Klein, 1998; Dionne et al., 2018). It is stated clearly by the participants that they value experience more than other approaches, and usually, they have to be quick in their decisions to prevent any harm to the student body. It can be seen that under the ambiguities and the lack of freedom from bureaucracy, it is impossible for the principals to know the whole picture of the crisis to decide in the best way. Also, the lack of freedom from bureaucracy may cause that their decision might not be the best answer, where their initiative might lead to an

investigation. Thus, naturalistic decision-making models are more suitable to understand the principals' way of decision-making in this study.

5.3. Implications for Practice

School administrators have developed different types of solutions against the pandemic and other crises that come with it. Remote education is a crisis for the schools in rural areas because most students do not have internet access and technological devices. Therefore, some school principals used different strategies in order to keep students in the education system. The most interesting solution came from the only female participant in the study. She organized and collected lesson videos from teachers and then shared them with her school's Instagram account. Keles et al. (2020) indicated that communication and interaction with students and parents during school closures increased participation in online activities. This example shows that taking the initiative according to local conditions drastically improves the education efforts in a crisis. However, it is observed that there is a tendency to follow bureaucratic orders among less experienced and highly experienced principals, which often causes inaction.

The participants stated that the risks of acting as a principal are very high, while the rewards are almost nonexistent. Thus the approach of general and local authorities towards the principals and their crisis solving abilities should be encouraging. Grissom and Condon (2021) suggested that the authorities should accept that the crises are not uncommon and create institutional support to build next-generation crisis leaders. Such support can be in the form of crisis management classes or training alongside mentoring programs with experienced colleagues while preparing the principals for the service. During the service, professional learning opportunities should be ready, including planning, communication, and organizational structuring training, alongside hands-on action learning programs with realistic scenarios. Furthermore, to encourage the principals to learn, Grissom and Condon (2021) advises that the crisis management competencies should be included in principal performance evaluations.

Another important issue is the selection and education of the school administrators. The administrators should have tenure and be career administrators instead of being assigned among available teachers with no knowledge. They should

have educational administration background with undergraduate or graduate-level education. Currently, there are no formal criteria or curriculum regarding crisis management in the Ministry of National Education for the principal selection process. Furthermore, it is observed that the inexperienced principals in this study are often more hesitant and lack the necessary knowledge about crisis management. Such a requirement backed with the necessary curriculum would alleviate the crisis management problems (Keles et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the higher authorities should facilitate crisis plan preparations by supporting the schools with template plans and codified guides while also ensuring that the schools have effective communication media. Another interesting suggestion is taken from US Army practices, where they write an “After Action Report” after an operation including the plans, the actual events, and the differences and their reasons, which facilitates learning from mistakes and identifying and closing the gaps in existing plans (Grissom & Condon, 2021).

The higher authorities should be prepared for crises themselves, as in the COVID-19 example, the conflict in decisions and the short notice for the necessary preparations caused trust issues and confusion among the school administration and students and their families. This problem necessitates that there should be only a single spokesperson authority regarding the communication with the educational community, and they should account for the necessary time and resources required by schools to be prepared. The lack of such means is emphasized in multiple studies (Korlu et al., 2021; Ozdogru, 2021; Keles et al., 2020). Another raised issue is that the problems in student access to educational activities have broadened the socioeconomic gaps among the students, where the principals were unable to address because of financial and structural problems. In the current Internet age, it is emphasized that schools should be modernized to provide technological and Internet access to every student (Keles et al., 2020; Korlu et al., 2021). Furthermore, in order to avoid confusion among the principals, it is suggested that the education-related laws and regulations should be updated and rewritten with clear language. While policies are prepared, the higher authorities should consult with different constituents of the schools (administration, teachers, students, and families), and these policies should not change with each government. Furthermore, enough flexibility and initiative space should be left to schools in order to account for the local conditions since the principals are the people

who know their students, school, and the community the best. Thus, increasing the school autonomy up to OECD averages would be good (Bakioglu & Demiral, 2013; Korlu et al., 2021). Furthermore, during emergency situations, there should be a mechanism where the principals can obtain information from a higher authority without following the hierarchy, which is exemplified in this study. (Bakioglu & Demiral, 2013).

5.4. Limitation of the Study

Within the context of this study, some limitations can be seen. Throughout data collection for the research that aimed to examine how school principals perceive crises and how they make decisions under crisis, there were some changes in the routine of the school term. Although the dynamic process of COVID-19 is perfect for doing research about the crisis, the data collection process and analysis of the collected data were quite challenging as the change was very rapid throughout the process. However, these changes did not make any differences in data.

Since this study was carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic, the first thing that comes to mind when the crisis example is mentioned was the pandemic. Therefore, repeating the study at another time may reveal other implications regarding crisis identification and sampling.

Moreover, the participants that contributed to the study are restricted to a district of Gaziantep province. This restriction is a limitation of this study since different local settings may reveal different findings or themes. In this study, the district under analysis has received a large influx of refugees, leading to an increased number of Syrian students. Furthermore, the majority of the schools whose principals are interviewed are in either disadvantaged or rural areas. This composition might have caused the results are not generalizable to the rest of the country.

Furthermore, among the participants, there is an inequality in terms of gender where only one of 19 participants is a woman. This inequality initially appears as a limitation due to the lack of perspective from a different gender. Thus, it can be stated that the perspectives of female school administrators are not well represented. Nevertheless, it should also be stated that the percentage of female school principals under the Ministry of National Education is given as 5.3% in 2020 (Turkiye Buyuk

Millet Meclisi, 2019). There are only 2904 female school principals out of 54036 state schools. The ratio of female participants among the participants is similar to the general situation in Turkey. Thus, it can be stated that this study achieves the proportional sampling of the general perspective of school administrators.

5.5. Recommendation for Future Research

The findings of the current study revealed some recommendations for further research on crisis perception of school principals, crisis management, and decision-making in schools.

Due to the findings of the current study, bureaucracy is one of the essential factors in the crisis decision-making process of school principals working in state schools. Further studies can concentrate on bureaucracy or include them in their research on crisis decision-making in K12 Schools.

The participants of this study are school principals. Particularly in decision-making in crisis, school principals stated that they are not decision-makers but in the position of implementing the decisions taken by the higher authorities. For future studies, it could be suggested to select participants from higher authorities to examine crisis management and decision-making in crises (provincial and district national education directors, branch managers). It will provide a better explanation of the concept of decision-making in a crisis.

The study was done in a district of Gaziantep. For further studies, it could be suggested to investigate the issue deeper in other provinces in Turkey so that the results of this study could be expanded for the others and different educational settings.

All participants in this research are the school principals in state schools. For further studies, not only state schools but private schools can be included in the study comparatively.

This research revealed that school principals need crisis management training. The recommendation for policymakers and practitioners is to direct the effort given to train school principals about crisis management and decision-making in crisis.

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER



DUMLUPINAR BULVARI 06800
ÇANKAYA ANKARA/TURKEY
T: +90 312 210 22 91
F: +90 312 210 79 59
uam@metu.edu.tr
www.uam.metu.edu.tr

Sayı: 28620816 / 182

16 HAZİRAN 2020

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Gökçe GÖKALP

Danışmanlığını yaptığınız Selin KIZILGÜN'ün "Okul Müdürlerinin Kriz Durumlarında Karar Verme Süreçlerinin İncelenmesi" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve 182 ODTU 2020 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.

Prof. Dr. Mine MISIRLISOY
Başkan

Prof. Dr. Tolga CAN
Üye

Doç. Dr. Pınar KAYGAN
Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ali Emre TURGUT
Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Şenife SEVİNÇ
Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ
Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Süreyya Özcan KABASAKAL
Üye

B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

GÖRÜŞME SORULARI

Görüşme Tarihi: --- _____

Başlangıç Zamanı:

1)Kriz deyince aklınıza ne geliyor?

* Krizi nasıl tanımlarsınız?

*Sizce hangi durumlar kriz durumu olarak adlandırılabilir?

*İçinde bulunduğumuz pandeminin bir kriz durumu olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?

Neden?

2) Krizlerin türüne ve boyutuna göre karar verme yetkisinin kimde olacağı değişkenlik gösteriyor mu? Bunun belirlenme süreci nasıl işliyor?

* COVID 19 sürecinde karar verme yetkisi kimdeydi ?

* Bu süreçte karar vericiler nasıl belirlendi ?

3) Okulunuzda veya Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü'nde hiç kriz masası oluşturma sürecine dahil oldunuz mu? Bu süreci anlatır mısınız?

*COVID 19 sürecinde kriz masası oluşturuldu mu? Süreç nasıl işledi?

*COVID-19 krizinin ortaya çıkışından şüana kadar olan karar verme sürecini ayrıntılı bir şekilde anlatabilir misiniz?

*Sürece dahil olacak kişilerin toplanması ne kadar zaman aldı? Sürece kaç kişi katıldı?

* Sizin rolünüz ve göreviniz neydi? Son karar kim ya da kimler tarafından verildi?

4) Krizlerin iyi yönetilebilmesi ve kurumun en az seviyede zarar görmesini sağlamak için çeşitli yöntem ve uygulamalar olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?

* COVID 19 sürecinin iyi yönetildiğini düşünüyor musunuz?

* Bu krizde, kurumların (okul, ilçe ve il milli eğitim müdürlükleri) daha az zarar görmeleri için neler yapıldı?

5) Krizlerin iyi yönetilememesi okulunuzda öğrenci ve öğretmenlere ne tür zararlar verebilir ? Öğrenci ve öğretmenlerin en az seviyede zarar görmelerini sağlamak için neler yaparsınız?

* Bu süreçte öğrenci ve öğretmenlerin daha az zarar görmeleri için neler yapıldı?

6) Bürokrasinin, hesapverebilirlik ilkesinin ve kuralların kriz anında karar verme sürecinde kararları ve karar verme sürecini nasıl etkilediğini düşünüyorsunuz?

8)Kriz anında kullandığınız kriz planlarınız var mı? Yoksa anlık kararlar mı alıyorsunuz? Anlık kararlarınızı alırken daha çok neleri göz önünde bulunduruyorsunuz?

-Örneğin COVID-19 sürecinde kullandığınız bir kriz planınız var mıydı? (Okul veya kişisel)

- Bu süreçte anlık kararlarınızı verirken neleri göz önünde bulundurdunuz?

9)Kriz durumlarında karar vermenizi etkileyen faktörler nelerdir?

*İçgüdüleriniz ve sezileriniz kriz durumlarında karar verme sürecinizi nasıl etkiler?

10)Bir krizle karşılaştığınızdaki zaman baskısı ve risk gibi faktörler size hangi duyguları yaşatır? (korku,stres, gerginlik, üzüntü, karmaşa,...)

* COVID 19 pandemisini ilk duyduğunuzda neler hissettiniz?

11) Zaman baskısı ve risk faktörleri karar vermenizi nasıl etkiler?

* Bu süreçte zaman baskısı ve risk faktörleri aldığınız kararları etkiledi mi?

12)Bahsettiğimiz konuların yanı sıra eklemek istediğiniz bir şey var mı?

Paylaştığımız bilgiler çalışmamız için önem arz etmektedir. Hem katılımınız hem de vakit ayırdığınız için çok teşekkür ederim.

Bitiş Zamanı: _____

C. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM

Demografik Bilgi Formu

Yaşınız:

Cinsiyetiniz: Kadın Erkek

Medeni Durumunuz: Evli Bekar

Ebeveyni olduğunuz çocuk sayısı:

Aylık ortalama geliriniz:

Doğum yeriniz:

En uzun süre yaşadığınız yer:

Eğitim Durumunuz:

Önlisans Mezunu Eğitim Fakültesi Mezunu

Diğer Fakülte Mezunu Yüksek Lisans Öğrencisi Yüksek Lisans Mezunu

Doktora Öğrencisi Doktora Mezunu

Çalışma Bilgileri

Çalıştığınız Okul Türü İlkokul Ortaokul İmam-Hatip Ortaokulu

İlkokul ve Ortaokul Anadolu Lisesi

Meslek Lisesi İmam-Hatip Lisesi

Branşınız:

Göreve (öğretmenliğe) başlama tarihiniz nedir? (Yıl olarak belirtiniz)

Çalıştığınız kurumda ne kadar süredir çalışmaktasınız?

Kaç yıldır yöneticilik yapmaktasınız?

Çalıştığınız kurumda kaç yıldır yöneticilik yapmaktasınız?

Okulunuzda:

Öğretmen sayısı kaçtır?	
Müdür yardımcısı sayısı kaçtır?	
Okulunuzda kaç sınıf vardır?	
İlkokul öğrenci mevcudunuz kaçtır?	
Ortaokul öğrenci mevcudunuz kaçtır?	
Lise öğrenci mevcudunuz kaçtır?	
Göçmen öğrenci sayınız kaçtır?	
Dil problemi yaşayan göçmen öğrenci sayınız kaçtır?	
Kaynaştırma öğrencisi sayınız kaçtır?	

D. INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Araştırmaya Gönüllü Katılım Formu

Bu araştırma, Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Eğitim Yönetimi ve Planlaması Bölümü yüksek lisans öğrencisi Selin Kızılgün tarafından Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Gökçe Gökalp danışmanlığında yürütülen bir çalışmadır. Bu form sizi araştırma koşulları hakkında bilgilendirmek için hazırlanmıştır.

Çalışmanın Amacı Nedir? Araştırmanın amacı okul müdürlerinin krizi nasıl tanımladıklarını ve kriz durumlarında nasıl karar verdiklerini incelemektir. Araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ederseniz, sizden beklenen, araştırmacıyla beraber demografik formu doldurmanız, yapacağınız görüşmede araştırmacının sorularına yanıt vermenizdir. Bu görüşme yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme sorularından oluşmaktadır. Bu çalışmaya katılım süresi sizin verdiğiniz yanıtlara göre değişmektedir.

Bize Nasıl Yardımcı Olmanızı İsteyeceğiz? Çalışma sırasında, sizinle görüşme yapılacaktır ve araştırmacının sorduğu sorulara yanıt vermeniz beklenmektedir.

Sizden Topladığımız Bilgileri Nasıl Kullanacağız? Araştırmaya katılımınız tamamen gönüllülük temelinde olmalıdır. Formda, sizden kimlik veya kurum belirleyici hiçbir bilgi istenmemektedir. Cevaplarınız ve ses kayıtlarınız (izininiz dahilinde) tamamıyla gizli tutulacak, sadece araştırmacılar tarafından değerlendirilecektir. Katılımcılardan elde edilecek bilgiler toplu halde değerlendirilecek ve bilimsel yayımlarda kullanılacaktır. Sağladığınız veriler gönüllü katılım formlarında toplanan kimlik bilgileri ile eşleştirilmeyecektir.

Katılımla ilgili bilmeniz gerekenler: Katılım sırasında sorulardan ya da herhangi başka bir nedenden ötürü kendinizi rahatsız hissederseniz araştırmacıya bildirerek cevaplama işini yarıda bırakıp çıkmakta serbestsiniz. Böyle bir durumda çalışmayı uygulayan kişiye, çalışmadan çıkmak istediğinizi söylemek yeterli olacaktır. Çalışma sonunda, bu araştırmayla ilgili sorularınız cevaplanacaktır.

Araştırmayla ilgili daha fazla bilgi almak isterseniz: Bu çalışmaya katıldığınız için şimdiden teşekkür ederiz. Araştırma hakkında daha fazla bilgi almak için Eğitim

Yönetimi ve Planlaması Bölümü yüksek lisans öğrencisi Selin Kızılgün (E-posta:selin.kizilgun@gmail.com) ile iletişim kurabilirsiniz.

Yukarıdaki bilgileri okudum ve bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum.

(Formu doldurup imzaladıktan sonra uygulayıcıya geri veriniz).

İsim Soyad

Tarih

İmza

----/----/-----

E. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKE ÖZET

Giriş

Krizler kurumların gelişiminde ve rutininde önemli bir rol oynar. Bir krizin doğru yönetilmesi gelecekte ortaya çıkabilecek krizlerin önlenmesinde büyük bir etkiye sahiptir (Özalp ve Levent, 2020). Eğitim yöneticilerinin krizlere karşı güçlü bir yönetim ve planlama becerisine sahip olması, krizlerin önlenmesi için büyük önem taşımaktadır (Özalp, 2020). Ancak her eğitim kurumunun kendi kurum kültürüne göre krizlere bakış açısı ve yönetim anlayışı farklı olabilir. Ayrıca çevresel faktörler, kriz oluşturabilecek durumlar arasında farklılıklara neden olabilir. Bu, krizlere tüm kurumlar için uygun tek tip bir yaklaşım olmayabileceği anlamına gelir. Bu nedenle yerel okul yöneticilerinin krizleri etkin bir şekilde planlamaları ve yönetmeleri gerekmektedir (Aksoy ve Aksoy, 2003).

2019 yılının Aralık ayında Çin'de ortaya çıkan ve Türkiye'de ilk kez 2020 Mart ayında görülen COVID-19 virüsü kısa sürede yayılarak pandemiye dönüşmüştür. COVID-19 pandemisi ise okullarda küresel çapta bir krize sebep olmuştur. UNESCO'nun tahminlerine göre, koronavirüs sebebiyle okulların kapanması en az 1,5 milyar öğrenciyi ve 63 milyon öğretmeni etkilemiştir (Keles vd., 2020). Pandeminin okullarda hijyen gereksinimlerini arttırması ve okulların kapanmasıyla öğretmenlerin teknolojiyi kullanma konusunda bilgi sahibi olmaması, öğrencilerin internet ve teknolojik donanıma erişimlerinin olmaması, belirsizlikler, eğitim kalitesinin ve motivasyonunun düşmesi gibi akut sorunlar ile her düzeyde yönetici stresli yöneticilerin olması gibi problemleri ortaya çıkarmıştır. (Keles vd., 2020).

Araştırmanın Amacı

Bu araştırmanın amacı, okul müdürlerinin kriz algılarını ve onların kriz durumlarında karar verme süreçlerini incelemektir. Bu sebeple, bu çalışma süregelen pandemi sürecinde ve süreci odağına alarak yapılmıştır. İlk olarak okul müdürlerinin

krizle ilgili tanımlamaları ve kriz örneklerinden yola çıkılarak, okul müdürlerinin krizi nasıl algıladıkları ortaya konulmaya çalışılmıştır. Daha sonra, krize yaklaşımı ve kriz durumlarında karar vermeyi etkileyen iç ve dış etmenler incelenmiştir. Hem merkezi yönetimin rolü hem de okul müdürlerine pandemi sürecinde verilen roller irdelenmiştir.

Araştırma soruları

- Okul müdürleri krizleri nasıl algılar ?
- COVID-19 pandemisi göz önünde bulundurularak , okul müdürleri kriz durumlarında nasıl karar verir ?

Alanyazın Taraması

Alanyazın temel olarak üç bölümden oluşmaktadır. Bu bölümlerde, sırasıyla kriz olgusu, kriz yönetimi ve karar verme ile ilgili çalışmalar incelenmiştir. Kriz, ağır ve geniş çaplı sonuçları olabilen , ani, kontrol edilemeyen ve beklenmedik olaylar olarak tanımlanmaktadır (Brock, 2002). Okul krizleri sadece öğrencileri, öğretmenleri ve yönetimi etkilemeyen, okul çalışanlarından velilere, eğitim aktivistlerinden, siyasi otoritelere ve hatta topluma kadar çeşitli paydaşlar üzerinde etkileri olabilecek durumlardır (Liou, 2009; Liou, 2014).

Okul krizlerinin ortak nedenleri, yetersizlikler, okulda inisiyatif ve liderlik eksikliği, kültürel farklılıklar ve kişilerarası ilişkiler gibi öğrencilerden, öğretmenlerden veya yöneticilerden kaynaklanan içsel faktörler ve değişen öğrenci yapılarından kaynaklanan sorunlar olabilir (Aksoy, 2003). Okul krizlerine sebep olan dış faktörler de olabilir. Üst otoritelerin veya medyanın baskısı, finansman sorunları ve günlük okul ihtiyaçlarının karşılanamaması krizlere yol açabilir. Kriz nedeni olarak doğal afetler, tespit edilmesi ve tahmin edilmesi neredeyse imkansız olduğundan ve insanların her zaman bunlara hazır olması gerektiğinden diğer krizlerden farklı olduğu söylenebilir (Dos ve Comert, 2012). COVID-19 Pandemisi bu tür krizlerin canlı bir örneğidir. Bu tür krizleri yönetmek genellikle önleme, hazırlık, müdahale, iyileşme ve öğrenme aşamalarını içeren bir döngü olarak düşünülür (Wooten ve James, 2008; Grissom ve Condon, 2021). Krizin ilerleyişini tahmin etmek için önerilen modellerde

temelde iki yaklaşım vardır. Birinci grup kriz döngüsünün doğrusal şekilde ilerleyen bir olgu olarak tanımlar (Fink, 1986; Mitroff, 2000). İkinci grup ise doğrusal kriz modelinin çeşitli bileşenlerin etkileşime girdiği ve çatıştığı okullar gibi organizasyonları açıklamak için yetersiz olduğunu ifade ederek, krizi bir kaos ve karmaşıklık teorisi bakış açısından analiz eder (Liou, 2014). Bu model, krizleri doğrusal olmamalarına, başlangıç koşullarına duyarlılıklarına ve krizdeki küçük sorunların etkilerine göre açıklar. Bu çalışmada, ikinci görüşün geçerli bir bakış açısı olduğu varsayılmaktadır.

Amerika Birleşik Devletleri (ABD) Eğitim Bakanlığı yönergelerine göre, kriz yönetimi aşamaları önleme, koruma, azaltma, müdahale ve kurtarma aşamalarına ayrılmıştır (Kerr ve King, 2018). Etkili bir kriz yönetimi stratejisi, kriz hakkında durumsal farkındalık, kriz ekibi oluşturma ve liyakata dayalı sorumluluk dağılımını gerektirir. Planlama kriz yönetiminde hayati önem taşır ve kriz ekibinin çeşitli sorumlulukları vardır. Bunlar, plan ve prosedür hazırlama ve tatbikatları yürütme, etkin iletişim, hasar değerlendirmesi ve kurtarma çabalarıdır. Güvenlik planının önceliği öğrenciler olmalı ve bu planlar periyodik olarak güncellenmelidir (Kerr ve King, 2018; U.S. DoE 2013b).

Karar verme kriz yönetimindeki kilit noktalardan biridir. Krizler belirsizliklere açıktır ve etkili bir karar verme mekanizmasına ihtiyaç vardır. Bu amaçla bazı teoriler, karar vermede duyguların rolüne göre kendi aralarında farklılık göstermektedir (Schippers ve Rus,2021). Bir görüş, başa çıkma teorisini karar verme yöntemleriyle üç aşamada birleştirir: bilgi toplama, fizibilite gibi kriterlere göre olası yanıtların sayısını azaltma ve krizlere karşı etkinlik açısından seçilen yanıtların analizi (Dionne vd., 2018). İkinci bir görüş olan doğal karar verme teorisi, yalnızca bilişsel süreçlere odaklanır. Bu teori, duyguları bilgi olarak kabul eder (Lipshitz vd., 2001). Doğal karar verme teorisine göre kararlar buluşsal yöntemler, içgüdüler ve deneyimlerden yola çıkılarak verilir. Kararlar devam eden krize ve karar vericinin kendi değerlerine ne kadar uyum sağlandıklarına göre seçilirler; bu nedenle, kararların en iyi olması gerekmez (Klein, 1998).

Kriz yönetiminde ve kriz sırasında karar verme de okul yönetiminin, özellikle de müdürlerin rolü hayati önem taşımaktadır. Okul müdürleri, tüm planlama ve önlem faaliyetlerinden, kriz ekibinin oluşturulmasından, krizin yönetimi ve krizlerin azaltılmasından sorumludur. Bu nedenle, müdürlerin yetkin kriz yönetimi için etkili

analiz yapabilme, karar verme becerisi, etkili iletişim ve duygusal zeka gibi yetkinliklere sahip olmaları gerekir (Grissom ve Condon, 2021). Bu yetkinlikler eğitim ihtiyacı doğurur. Türkiye'de okul müdürlerinin temel eğitimi Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı tarafından yapılmaktadır ve bu eğitimlerde kriz yönetimi eğitiminin yeterince önemsenmediği ve yöneticilerin iş başında öğrenmelerinin beklendiği görülmektedir.

EBSCOHost, Google Scholar ve Scencedirect veri tabanlarından 2019-2021 yıllarındaki çalışmalara bakıldığında, Türkiye'deki okullarda kriz yönetimi ve krizlerde karar verme üzerine odaklanan çok az sayıda ciddi bulunduğu görülmektedir. Yakın zamanda yapılan çalışmalara bakıldığında, İstanbul ilinde 30 okul müdürü ile yapılan bir nitel çalışma, planlama ve mevzuat sorunları sebebiyle okul müdürlerinin belirsiz durumlarda karar verirken daha az inisiyatif aldıklarını veya bu tür durumlarda eylemsizlik gösterdiklerini ortaya koymuştur (Bakioglu ve Demiral, 2013). Yine İstanbul ilinde yapılan benzer bir çalışma da öğretmenlere birlikte çalıştıkları okul müdürlerinin krizin farklı aşamalarındaki kriz yönetimine ilişkin algıları sorulmuştur. Bu çalışma, öğretmenlerin birlikte çalıştıkları okul müdürlerinin kriz yönetimine olan güvenlerinin birlikte çalışma süresine ve okul kademesine bağlı olduğunu göstermiştir (Ozalp ve Levent, 2020). COVID-19 pandemisi sürecinde ise okul müdürlerinin liderlik davranışlarını ve karşılaştıkları sorunları inceleyen çalışmalar yapılmıştır. Keleş (2020), temel sorunların teknolojik ekipman ve internet erişimi eksikliği ve öğrenciler arasında düşük motivasyon olduğunu göstermiştir. Bu çalışmada okul müdürleri, etkili kriz iletişiminin, dijital eğitim becerilerinin edinilmesi ve krizle etkili başa çıkma stratejilerinin geliştirilmesinin önemini vurgulamışlardır. Bu bulgular 2021 yılında Özdoğru tarafından yapılan bir çalışmada desteklenmiştir ve Özdoğru çalışmasında Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı'nın kriz eylem planının eksikliklerini tartışmıştır. Bu plansızlık, veli ve öğrencilerle yaşanan temel iletişim sorunlarının nedeni olarak gösterilmektedir. Ayrıca bu çalışmada müdürler pandemi sırasında idari, iletişim, finansman, planlama, personel, okul iklimi ve kültürü, sağlık ve zindelik, eğitim sorunlarına karşı yapabildikleri herşeyi yaptıklarını belirttiler (Özdoğru, 2021).

Devam eden COVID-19 pandemisi, çok sayıda insanı kaybetmemize sebep olmuştur (World Health Organization, 2021). Pandemi önlemlerinin bir sonucu olarak ulusal karantinaların yanı sıra okullar birçok kez kapatılırken, uzaktan eğitim ve pandemi koşullarına uygun okul içi konaklamalar hazırlanmak zorunda kalmıştır

(Korlu vd., 2021). Dolayısıyla bu durum, okul yönetimlerinin kriz durumlarına yönelik eylem ve algılarını incelemek için önemli bir fırsata sahiptir. Türkiye'de pandeminin okullarda ve milli eğitimde tutarsız politika ve kararları ortaya çıkardığı bildirilmiştir (Korlu vd., 2021). Değişimlerin sıklığı ve iletişim sorunları okul yönetimlerini zora sokmuş, ani değişimler ise hazırlıkları imkansız hale getirmiş ve velilerin okullara güvenini azaltmıştır. Ayrıca, sosyoekonomik eşitsizlikler ve uzaktan eğitime yönelik alt yapı eksiklikleri sınıf yönetimini zorlaştırmış, öğrenci katılımını ve performansını düşürmüştür (Korlu vd., 2021). Bu zorluklar karşısında, Türkiye'deki okul müdürlerinin gelecekteki krizlere karşı daha iyi hazırlamak için, hazırbulunuşluklarının ve algılarının araştırılması elzemdir. Bu çalışma, okul müdürlerinin COVID-19 salgını sırasında karar verme sürecini ve kriz algılarını, hazır bulunuşluklarını ve karşılaştıkları zorlukları araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Veri toplama süreci ve veri analizi

Görüşme sorularının hazırlanmasından sonra ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu'na Mart 2020'de izin için başvurulmuş ve izin Haziran 2020'de alınmıştır (Appendix A). Etik izin alındıktan sonra Gaziantep ilinin çalışmanın yapıldığı ilçe Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü'nden gerekli izin alınmış ve görüşmelere 2 Eylül 2020'de başlanmıştır. On dokuz okul yöneticisiyle yapılan görüşmeler sonrasında veri toplama süreci 20 Kasım 2020'de görüşmeler açısından sonlandırılmıştır. Doküman analizi görüşmeler sonlandırıldıktan sonra yapılmıştır. Veri analizi için kodlama tekniği kullanılmıştır ve veri analizi betimsel analiz ve içerik analizi olmak üzere iki ana analiz şekliyle gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Sonuç

Bu bölümde, Gaziantep'in bir ilçesinde 19 okul müdürü ile yapılan görüşmelerin hem betimsel hem de içerik analizi yoluyla elde edilen sonuçlarına yer verilmiştir. Görüşmelerde ortaya çıkan ana temalar, kriz nedeni olarak kişiler arası ilişkiler, taşra okullarının yerel sorunları ve taşınmalı eğitim sisteminden kaynaklanan tehditler ve bürokrasinin inisiyatif üzerindeki etkisidir. Katılımcıların karar verme de bürokrasinin etkisine ilişkin düşünceleri farklılaşmıştır. Bazı müdürler bürokratik

emirlere göre davrandıklarını belirtirken, bazı müdürler gerektiğinde proaktif veya bazen bürokratik emirlere karşı çıkarak hareket etmişlerdir.

İlk tema olan okul müdürlerinin kriz algısı üç alt temaya ayrılmıştır. Bu alt temalar okul müdürlerinin kriz tanımlamaları, okul müdürlerinin kriz örnekleri ve neden pandemiyi kriz olarak tanımladıklarıdır. Kriz tanımlamaları altında ortaya çıkan en yaygın kodlar rutin olmayan, beklenmedik olaylar ve olağanüstü durumlardır. Katılımcılara kriz örnekleri sorulduğunda COVID-19 pandemisinin yanı sıra okul kapanmaları ve doğal afetler ilk akla gelen kriz örnekleri olmuştur. Kişilerarası çatışmalar da diğer kodlardan farklı olarak, çalışmaya katılan okul müdürlerinin dörtte biri tarafından kriz örneği olarak görüldü. Katılımcılar, COVID-19 pandemisinin çeşitli alanları etkilemesi ve eğitim üzerindeki olumsuz etkileri gibi nedenlerle kriz olduğunu düşünmüşlerdir. Katılımcılardan bazıları ise pandeminin rutin olmayan ve beklenmedik doğasını vurgulamışlardır.

İkinci tema olan kriz yönetimi ile ilgili olarak ortaya çıkan alt temalar kriz planı, kriz masası, krizin öğrenci ve öğretmenlere zararları ve daha iyi kriz yönetimi yöntemleridir. Kriz masası olarak resmi olarak belirlenmiş bir komitenin olmadığı, ancak yönetici yönlendirme ve danışma komiteleri veya benzeri disiplin komitelerinin kriz masası örnekleri olarak gösterildiği görülmektedir. COVID-19 için bir kriz masasının varlığı ile ilgili olarak, katılımcıların yarısı herhangi bir kriz masasına dahil olmadıklarını belirtirken, geri kalanı pandemi hakkında yapılan toplantı ve faaliyetlerin bir kriz masası oluşturup oluşturmadığına emin olmadıklarını belirttiler.

Müdürlerin COVID-19 krizindeki rolleri ve yöntemleri ile ilgili olarak, katılımcıların dörtte üçü üst makamlar tarafından verilen sorumlulukları yerine getirmiştir. Bu sorumluluklar hakkındaki genel fikir birliği, artan iş yükü, artan sağlık riskleri ve artan bilişsel yük iken, bu görevler genellikle bedelsiz yerine getirilmektedir. Daha iyi kriz yönetimi için yöntem ve uygulamalara ilişkin sorular sorulduğunda katılımcılar, kriz ekiplerine, önlemlere ve finansal güce vurgu yaptılar. Katılımcılar, yanlış yönetilen bir krizin sonuçları olarak öğrencilerin fiziksel ve psikolojik sağlıklarının etkilenebileceğini belirtmişlerdir. İş veriminin düşmesi, öğrenme ortamının bozulması ve öğrencinin okulu bırakmasına neden olabilecek sorunlar yine yanlış kriz yönetiminin bir sonucu olarak görülmüştür. COVID-19 sürecinde bu tür zararlı etkilere karşı çoğu katılımcı Sağlık Bakanlığı ve Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı'nın verdiği yönlendirmeleri takip ettiğini ifade etmektedirler. Ayrıca bazı

katılımcılar, uzaktan eğitimin olumsuz etkilerini en aza indirmek için sosyal medya ve çevrimiçi sohbet platformlarını kullanmak, ev ziyaretleri yapmak, ilkokullar için hikaye kitapları dağıtmak gibi çeşitli yöntemler geliştirdikleri görülmüştür.

Okul müdürleri Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı'nın istediği kriz planlarını dokümantasyon şeklinde hazırladığını ifade etmişlerdir. Katılımcıların bir kısmı bu planların güncellenmediğini belirtmiş ve kriz öncesi plan yapmanın imkansız olduğunu ve bu nedenle krizler sırasında hazırlık yaptıklarını iddia etmişlerdir. Özellikle COVID-19 için sadece bir okul yeni akademik yıl başlamadan önce bir pandemi kriz planı hazırladığını belirtti. Okulum Temiz Sertifikası alabilmek için pandemi kriz planlarının hazırlanması zorunludur, okulların çoğu pandemi kriz planını bir gereklilik olarak hazırlanmıştır. Genel olarak, müdürlerin kriz masaları ve kriz planlaması konusunda biraz bilgili olduğu, ancak üst makamlardan bir talep gelene kadar herhangi bir işlem yapılmadığı görülmektedir.

Çalışmanın ikinci araştırma sorusunda ise katılımcıların kriz durumlarında karar verme süreci incelenmiştir. Katılımcılara karar vermelerini etkileyen faktörler sorulduğunda, altısı bürokratik kararların ve yönergelerin verdikleri kararlarda büyük bir faktör olduğunu belirtmiştir. Bürokrasinin karar verme üzerindeki etkisi, müdürler arasında olumlu ya da olumsuz olarak farklılık göstermektedir. Karar verici merciler sorulduğunda, katılımcıların neredeyse yarısı üst mercilerin önemini belirtirken, bazı katılımcılar küçük çaplı krizlerin okul içinde çözülmesi gerektiğini vurgulamıştır. Katılımcıların çoğunluğu, pandemi sırasında en büyük yetkililerin genel olarak Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı ve Sağlık Bakanlığı, yerel olarak il ve ilçe düzeyinde ise Hıfzısıhha kurulları olduğunu belirttiler. Ayrıca, okul müdürlerin pandemi sırasında karar vermede çok büyük bir rol oynamadığını ve kararların uygulanmasından sorumlu olduklarını belirtmişlerdir. Katılımcılar, Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı'nın aldığı kararlar arasındaki tutarsızlıklara ve çelişkilere de dikkat çekmişlerdir.

Okul müdürlerinin, kararlarında içgüdülerin ve sezginin oynadığı role gelince, bazı kalıplar ortaya çıkmıştır. Deneyimsiz müdürler içgüdüleri ve sezgileri ile karar vermeye daha az eğilimli olduklarını belirttiler, ve içgüdüleri veya sezileri yerine kararları yardımcıları ve diğer deneyimli meslektaşları ile tartıştıklarını belirttiler. Tecrübeli müdürler tecrübe ve eğitimlerinin kendilerini iyi hazırladığını ifade ederken, bazı müdürler de kararlarında vicdanlarının rolünün öneminden bahsettiler. Katılımcılara zaman baskısı altında hissettikleri duygular ve bir kriz anında riskler

sorulduğunda, yarısından fazlası bu koşullarda stres hissettiklerini kabul etmektedirler. Stresli olduğunu ifade eden katılımcıların büyük çoğunluğu deneyimli müdürlerdir. Ayrıca müdürler, zaman baskısı ve risklerin, bilişsel aşırı yük, duygusal dengesizlik ve strese bağlı duyguların oluşumuna sebebiyet verdiğini ve bu durumların karar verme süreçlerini etkilediğini belirtmişlerdir.

Sonuç kısmında, bu çalışmalar sırasında ortaya çıkan ana temalar özetlenmiştir. Çalışmaya katılan 19 müdürün kriz algısı ve kriz yönetimi bilgisi incelenmiştir. Daha sonra onların kriz durumlarında karar verme süreci ele alınmıştır. Bu temalar, devam eden bir kriz örneği olarak COVID-19 bağlamında analiz edilmektedir.

Tartışma

Okul müdürlerinin kriz algısını incelemek için katılımcıların kriz tanımları sorulmuştur. Kriz tanımlarına bakıldığında, okul müdürlerinin çoğu krizi rutin olmayan, beklenmedik olaylar ve olağanüstü durumlar olarak tanımlamışlardır. Diğer öne çıkan kodlar ise akut problemler ve hemen çözüm bekleyen konulardır. Burada ortaya çıkan bulgu okul müdürleri okulun rutin işleyişini engelleyen olayları kriz olarak tanımlamışlardır. Brock (2002), krizi ani, kontrol edilemez ve beklenmeyen geniş çaplı ve ağır sonuçları olan olaylar olarak tanımlamıştır. Okul müdürlerinin bu tanımlamaları Brock'un krizin tanımına uygundur. Okul krizi ise farklı araştırmacılar tarafından okulla alakalı belirsizlik, karmaşıklık, aciliyet içeren okulun içinde veya dışında olabilen travmatik olaylar olarak tanımlanmıştır. (Krauss, 1998; Seeger, 2002; Pearson & Clair, 1998; Simola, 2005; Liou 2014). Bu tanımlamalar okul müdürlerinin krizle ilgili görüşleriyle örtüşmektedir. Bu çalışmada bu tanımdan farklı olarak okul müdürleri krizi okulun içinde veya dışında olabilen durumlar olarak belirtmemişlerdir. Onların verdikleri kriz örneklerinden yola çıkılarak okul müdürlerinin çoğunun krizi okul içinde olan bir durum olarak gördükleri anlaşılmaktadır.

Okul müdürlerinin kriz algılarını daha iyi anlamak için onlara verebilecekleri kriz örnekleri sorulmuştur. Katılımcıların büyük çoğunluğu pandemiye ve pandeminin sebep olduğu okul kapanmalarını kriz olarak örneklendirmiştir. Ayrıca doğal afetler, kazalar, sağlık problemleri de okul müdürleri tarafından kriz olarak görülmüştür. Çalışmaya katılan okul müdürlerinin yarısından fazlasının krizi rutin olmayan olarak tanımladıkları düşünüldüğünde, verdikleri kriz örneklerinin bu tanıma uyduğu

görülmektedir. Okul müdürlerinin krizi olağanüstü durum olarak tanımlamalarının sebebi içinde bulunduğumuz pandemi koşulları olabilir. Ayrıca, öğrenci ve öğretmen yoğunluğunun fazla olduğu okullarda çalışan okul müdürlerinin kişilerarası çatışmaları kriz örneği olarak verdikleri görülmektedir. Bu durumun sebebi, bu tür krizlerle diğer katılımcılardan daha fazla karşılaşılıyor olmaları olabilir.

Araştırmaya katılan okul müdürlerinin pandeminin kriz olma nedeni ile ilgili görüşlerinin farklılaştığı görülmektedir. Deneyimli okul müdürleri pandemiye geniş bir bakış açısıyla bakarak, pandeminin eğitim de dahil olmak üzere bir çok alanı etkilediğini söylemişlerdir. Özellikle kırsal kesimde görevli okul müdürleri, teknolojik altyapının uzaktan eğitim için yetersiz olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir. Amerika’da yapılan bir çalışma da kırsal kesimdeki okulların pandemi sürecinde daha çok zorluk yaşadıkları belirtilmiştir (Hayes vd., 2021). Okul müdürleri aynı zamanda internet erişiminin eksikliğinden ve bu süreçte öğrencileri güdülemenin zorluğundan bahsetmişlerdir. Uzaktan eğitimin öğrencilerin sosyal gelişimi ve olumlu davranış geliştirme sürecinde yetersiz olduğunu da ifade etmişlerdir. Bu bulgular yorumlandığında, özellikle kırsal kesimdeki okullarda pandeminin daha yıkıcı etkileri olduğu görülmektedir. Kırsal bölgelerde müdür olarak çalışan katılımcılar uzaktan eğitime erişim sorunuyla yüzleşmektedirler. Okul müdürleri uzaktan eğitimde sınıf yönetiminin zorluğu, öğrenci motivasyonunun azlığı, teknolojik altyapı yetersizliği ve sosyoekonomik durumla ilgili problemlerle uğraşmaktadır. 2020 yılında ölçme değerlendirme uygulamaları yapılmadan öğrencilerin sınıf geçtiği okul müdürleri tarafından ifade edilmiştir. Bu durumda pandemi sadece öğrencilerin akademik gelişimini etkilememiştir, aynı zamanda eğitim çıktılarına da ölçmeyi engellemiştir.

Deneyimli okul müdürleri pandeminin ortaya çıkardığı problemleri daha iyi gözlemlemişlerdir. Yeterli otorite ve finansal güçleri bulunmadığı için internet altyapısı eksikliği ve teknolojik ekipman eksikliği gibi durumlarda yapabildikleri sınırlıdır. Sadece, okul müdürlerinin değil Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı’nın da bulunduğu çözümler ülke çapında yetersiz kalmaktadır. EBA TV’nin başlatılması ve online derslerin yapılması gibi olumlu adımlar atılmıştır. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı EBA platformunun ücretsiz kullanılması için telekomünikasyon şirketleri ile anlaşma sağlamıştır. Ama bu anlaşma, uzaktan eğitimde verilen online dersleri kapsamamaktadır. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı’nın bile yetersiz çözüm ürettiği bu

durumda, teknik altyapı ve teknoloji eksiklikleri ile ilgili sorunların çözümü sadece okul müdürlerinden beklenemeyeceği anlaşılmaktadır.

Kriz masası kriz yönetiminin önemli bir parçasıdır. Bu çalışmada okul müdürlerinin kriz masasını farklı şekillerde tanımlamışlardır. Kriz masasının okul müdürleri için okullarda kurulması gereken bir yapı olmadığı görülmüştür. Okul müdürleri okuldaki bazı oluşumları kriz masası olarak görme eğilimindedirler. İş Sağlığı ve Güvenliği Komitesi, Rehberlik Komitesi, Disiplin komitesine benzer bir oluşum, ve öğretmenler toplantısını kriz masası olarak tanımlamışlardır. Pandemi süresince üst otoritelerin verdiği görevler için yapılan toplantıları da kriz masası olarak görmüşlerdir. Okul müdürlerinin çoğunluğu her hangi bir kriz masasına dahil olmadıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Tüm bu bulgulara göre, okul müdürlerinin kriz masasının amacı ve etkinliği ile ilgili yeterli bilgi sahibi olmadığı görülmüştür. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığının bununla ilgili okul müdürlerine eğitim vermesi gerekmektedir. Daha iyi bir kriz yönetimi için önlemler, finansal güç, paydaşlarla iletişim kriz ekibi oluşumu, planlama ve okul müdürünün yeterliliği okul müdürleri tarafından gerekli görülmüştür. Okul bütçelerinin pandemi ile savaşmak için yeterli olmadığı görülmektedir ve okulların bakanlık tarafından desteklenmesi gerekmektedir. Ayrıca, ekonomik olarak uygun olmayan öğrenciler için tablet bilgisayar dağıtımını da yetersiz kalmıştır. Bu durum, eğitimde sosyoekonomik duruma bağlı eşitsizliği derinleştirmektedir.

Okul müdürlerinin uzaktan eğitime erişim engeli olan öğrencilere ulaşmak için yaptıkları bazı uygulamalar bu çalışmada ortaya çıkmıştır. Okul müdürleri, sosyal medyayı ve sohbet programlarını kullanarak, öğrencileri belirli bir günde okula çağırıp kitap erişimi sağlayarak, öğretmenlerin küçük gruplarla ev ziyareti yapmalarına izin vererek uzaktan eğitime erişemeyen öğrencilerin okulla bağını kuvvetlendirmişlerdir. Bunların içindeki en verimli örnek, sosyal medyadan öğretmenlerin çektiği ders videolarını yayınlamak öğrencilerin her zaman erişebilmesini sağlayan bir okul müdürü olmuştur. Bu durum, okul müdürlerinin pandemi gibi zorlu bir krizde bile inisiyatif aldıklarında başarılı örnekler ortaya koyabildiklerini gösterir.

Kriz planları okul müdürleri tarafından yapılması zorunlu dokümanlar olarak görülmektedir. Bu çalışmada da görüldüğü üzere, yatılı okul hariç diğer okullarda, ancak pandemi başladıktan aylar sonra pandemi ile ilgili kriz planı yapılmıştır. Okul müdürlükleri kriz planını “Okulum Temiz” Belgesini alabilmek için bir zorunluluk

teşkil ettiği için hazırlamışlardır. Yatılı okulun kriz planı ise oldukça ayrıntılıdır. Ancak bu planın iş sağlığı ve güvenliği gereksinimleri dolayısıyla mı hazırlandığı açık değildir. Kimi okullar ise plan hazırlamama sebebi olarak tüm kararların yerel sağlık kurulları ya da Bakanlıktan gelmesi olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Ancak, bu kararların son dakika bildirilmesi ve sürekli değişmesinin okul yönetimleri ve velilerde güven kaybına yol açtığı da bu çalışmada belirtilen sonuçlardan bir tanesidir. Bu yüzden, Bakanlığın okul müdürlüklerini planlama için teşvik etmesi, açık ve şeffaf olması, planlama konusunda yardımcı olması gerekmektedir.

Okul müdürleri, karar verme süreçlerini etkileyen faktörler olarak bürokrasiyi, tutarsız üst yönetim kararlarını, zaman baskısı ve riskleri ve son olarak kendi içgüdü, önsezi ve deneyimlerini belirtmişlerdir. Önceki çalışmalarda, başarılı okul müdürlerinin kendi deneyim ve sosyal becerilerini kriz çözümede kullandıklarını belirtmişlerdir (Mutch, 2015). Ayrıca Bakioğlu ve Demiral (2013) de bürokrasi kaynaklı zaman baskısı ve belirsizliklerin karar alma becerilerini ciddi biçimde etkilediğini göstermiştir. Çalışmamızda, 15 yıl üzeri deneyimi olan ve 6 yıldan az deneyimli okul müdürleri bürokrasinin karar alma becerilerini pozitif olarak etkilediğini belirtirken, diğer okul müdürleri bürokrasinin negatif etkilerini vurgulamıştır. Özetle, bürokrasi bazen hiyerarşi içerisinde sorunların kısa sürede halledilmesini sağlarken, bazı durumlarda krizin kilitlenmesine de yol açabilmektedir. Bir çalışmaya göre, Türkiye’de okullar hakkında alınan kararların yüzde 72.9’u merkezi yönetimden gelmektedir (Korlu vd., 2021).

Kriz durumunda çalışanların motivasyonu çok önemlidir. Motivasyonun sağlanması konusunda iki farklı teori ortaya atılmıştır (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2021). Teori X, motivasyonun sağlanması için korku ve kontrolün önemli olduğunu söylerken, Teori Y ödül mekanizmasının önemini belirtmektedir. Bu çalışmada, okul müdürlerinin Teori X’e yakın olduğu söylenebilir. Bu teorinin etkisine örnek olarak, bazı okul müdürleri alt seviye yetkililerin üst yönetime korku sebebi ile herşeyin sorunsuz olduğunu göstermeye çalıştıklarını ve üst yönetimin bu durumdan habersiz olduğunu söylemiştir. Aynı şekilde, okul müdürleri bu gibi durumlarda, öğrencilerin sağlık ve güvenliği söz konusu ise inisiyatif aldıklarını, gerekirse üst yönetime direkt başvurduklarını belirtmiştir. Ancak, bu tarz eylemler müdürler için genelde bir ödül getirmemekte, aksine ceza riski yaratmaktadır. Bakioğlu ve Demiral (2013), okul müdürlerinin görev tanımı dışında yaptığı eylemlerin suç teşkil edebileceğine dikkat

çekmektedir. Sonuç olarak, okul müdürleri bu sebeplerle karar alma konusunda çekingen davranmaktadır. Merkezi yönetimin okul müdürlerine daha fazla söz hakkı tanınması, kriz dönemlerinde hızlı ve doğru kararlar alınabilmesi için çok yararlı olabilir.

Müdürlerin karar alırken içgüdü ve önsezilerine başvurup başvurmadıkları sorulduğunda, bir kısmı deneyimlerine önsezilerinden daha fazla başvurduklarını belirtmişlerdir. Bu müdürlere göre hızlı karar almak kararsızlıktan daha iyidir. Aksi takdirde öğrenci ve öğretmenler zarar görebilirler. Bu durum, naturalistik karar alma modeli prensiplerine uygun düşmektedir (Lipshitz vd., 2001). Naturalistik karar alma modeline göre kararlar içinde bulunulan durum ve karar alıcının değerleri göz önünde bulundurularak, deneyim ve önseziler yoluyla alınır (Dionne vd., 2018).

COVID-19 pandemisi süresince okulların kapatılması hakkında alınan kararların son dakika açıklanması ve sürekli değişmesi okul müdürlerinin karar almaları açısından büyük belirsizliklere yol açmıştır ve olumsuz etkilemiştir. Bu gibi durumlarda şeffaf ve anlaşılır haberleşme çok önemlidir (Grissom ve Condon, 2021). Bu gibi belirsizlik durumlarında, okul müdürlerinin riskli kararlar almadıklarını, örnek eski kararlar aradıklarını, çalışma arkadaşlarına danıştıklarını gözlemlemekteyiz. Ayrıca okul müdürleri zaman baskısı ve belirsizlik karşısında panik ve korku hissettiklerini, stres altına girdiklerini ve krizin tüm açılarını düşünemediklerini belirtmişlerdir. Bir kadın okul müdürü ise, kriz durumunda duygularının etkilediğini, bu sebeple erkek müdür yardımcılara da danıştığını bildirmiştir.

Teori açısından bakıldığında, çalışmamızda kriz tanımları ve örnekleri hakkında verilen cevapların önceki tanımlara uygun olduğunu görmekteyiz (Krauss, 1998; Seeger, 2002; Pearson ve Clair, 1998; Simola, 2005; Liou 2014). Okul krizleri hakkındaki düşünceler kriz modelleri hakkında incelendiğinde ise okulların günlük işleyişinin büyük oranda belirsizlik ve karmaşıklık içerdiği, bu yüzden kaos ve karmaşıklık teorilerinin okul krizlerini incelemede uygun olabileceği anlaşılmaktadır (Liou, 2014; Liou, 2015). Özellikle okul müdürleri küçük iletişim hatalarının kriz açısından yarattığı büyük problemlere dikkat çekmişlerdir.

Okul müdürlerinin yanıtları göz önüne alındığında kararlarını naturalistic karar alma modeline göre aldıkları görülmüştür (Lipshitz vd., 2001). Katılımcılar, karar alırken deneyimlerine daha çok önem verdiklerini ve belirsizlik durumunda öğrencilerin sağlığı ve güvenliği için hızlı karar almaya çalıştıklarını belirtmişler,

ancak bürokrasiden dolayı inisiyatif almaktan çekindiklerini de söylemişlerdir. Naturalistik karar alma modeline göre alınan kararlar duruma en uygun olanlardır ancak her zaman en iyi karar olmak zorunda değildir (Klein, 1998). Bu gibi kısıtlarda müdürlerin karar alma yöntemlerini naturalistik karar alma modeline daha uygundur.

Çalışmamız sonucunda, okul müdürlerinin kriz durumlarında etkili yönetim ve karar alma becerisi gösterebilmeleri için bazı öneriler ortaya çıkmıştır. İlk olarak, okul müdürlerinin verdiği pozitif örnekler göz önüne alındığında, inisiyatifin ve kararların yerinde alınmasının kriz durumlarında eğitim aktivitelerinin başarısının arttığı gözlenmektedir. Ancak, okul müdürleri ceza riskinden dolayı bürokratik emirleri uygulamaya ya da karar almamaya daha yatkındır. Bu duruma çözüm olarak üst yönetimin krizleri olağan durumlar olarak kabul edip okul müdürlerinin bu konuda eğitilmesine ağırlık vermesi, performans değerlendirmelerine kriz yönetim becerilerini de eklemesi, destek ve danışma mekanizmaları kurması verilebilir. Ayrıca okul yöneticisi seçiminde müdürlerin kariyer yöneticisi olarak seçilmeleri, eğitim yönetimi derecesi sahip olmaları çok faydalı olabilir. Şu an Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı kriz yönetimi için bir kriter ve eğitim müfredatı oluşturmamış olup, böyle bir müfredatın yeni ve tecrübesiz müdürlerin kriz yönetimi becerilerine ciddi katkı sağlayabileceği önerilebilir (Keleş vd., 2020). Ayrıca üst yönetimin kriz planlaması için örnek planlar ve kılavuzlar hazırlaması, okul yöneticilerine bu konuda danışma hizmeti sağlaması önem taşımaktadır (Grissom ve Condon, 2021).

Ayrıca üst yönetimin olası krizler için kendi planlarını ve hazırlıklarını yapması gerekmekte, açık ve ulaşılabilir bir kriz iletişimi mekanizması oluşturması gerekmektedir. Bu mekanizmaların eksikliği başka çalışmalarda ve bu çalışmada belirtilmiştir (Korlu vd., 2021; Ozdogru, 2021; Keles vd., 2020). Ayrıca üst yönetim okullara gerekli finansal ve teknolojik altyapıyı ve okulların krizlere hazırlık için daha donanımlı olmasını sağlamalıdır. Okul müdürlerinin karşılaştığı belirsizlikleri aşmak için varolan kanun ve kuralların yenilenmesi ve anlaşılır bir biçimde hazırlanması, ayrıca bu kuralların hazırlanmasında yerel birimlerin, çalışanların ve öğrenciler ile ailelerinin de fikrinin alınması faydalı olacaktır. Ayrıca, okul müdürleri yerel çevrelerini en iyi bilen kişiler olarak üst yönetim tarafından inisiyatif almaları için esneklik tanınmalı ve onların hızlı bilgi sahibi olmaları için mekanizmalar geliştirilmelidir (Bakioglu ve Demiral, 2013).

Çalışmamızın bazı kısıtları bulunmaktadır. Çalışma COVID-19 pandemisi içerisinde gerçekleştiğinden veri toplama sürecinde okullarda çok fazla değişiklik yaşanmıştır. Ancak bu durum verilerde bir değişikliğe yol açmamıştır. Ayrıca kriz örnekleri sorulduğunda, okul müdürleri öncelikle pandemi örneğini vermiştir. Bu çalışmanın farklı dönemde tekrarlanması kriz tanımları ve örnekleri konusunda farklı cevaplara yol açabilir. Ayrıca çalışmanın gerçekleştiği bölge ciddi oranda mülteci almış ve çalışmanın gerçekleştiği okullar dezavantajlı ya da taşra bölgelerinde bulunmaktadır. Tekrarlanan çalışmaların sonuçları bu sebeple farklılık gösterebilir.

Cinsiyet eşitliği açısından çalışmamızda 19 katılımcı içerisinde sadece bir kadın müdür bulunmaktadır. Bu bir kısıt olarak görülebilir. Diğer yandan Türkiye'deki okul müdürlerinin sadece yüzde 5.3 ü kadındır, bu yüzden çalışmamız orantılı bir örnekleme içermektedir (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, 2019).

Çalışmamız, gelecek çalışmalar için bazı öneriler barındırmaktadır. Örneğin çalışmamızda bürokrasi önemli bir faktör olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. İleri bir çalışmada bürokrasinin etkilerine odaklanması önemli sonuçlar verebilir. Ayrıca, kriz yönetiminde karar verme açısından çalışmamız sadece okul müdürlerine odaklanmıştır. Üst yöneticilerin de benzer bir çalışma ile incelenmesi kriz döneminde okullarda karar verme süreçlerini daha iyi açıklayabilir. Son olarak çalışmamız Türkiye'nin farklı bölgelerinde ve ayrıca özel okullarda tekrarlanarak genişletilebilir ve karşılaştırmalı bir çalışma yapılarak sonuçlar incelenebilir. Çalışmamız okul müdürlerinin kriz yönetimi eğitimine ihtiyacı olduğunu göstermektedir. Kanun yapıcılar ve üst yöneticiler için bu ihtiyacın dikkate alınması önerilebilir.

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YAZARIN / AUTHOR

Soyadı / Surname : SARIHAN

Adı / Name : Selin

Bölümü / Department : Eğitim Bilimleri, Eğitim Yönetimi ve Planlaması / Educational Sciences, Educational Administration and Planning

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