



Investigating the relationship between organizational communications and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan

Arabi¹ and Soleimanpour Omran²

1 Graduated M.A. student in Educational Management , Department of Educational Management, Bojnourd Branch, Islamic Azad University , Bojnourd , Iran

2 Department of Educational Management, Bojnourd Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bojnourd , Iran
Corresponding author: Email: soleymanpour@bojnourdiau.ac.ir / m.pouromran@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between organizational communications and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan. The research method is descriptive-survey and correlational, which based on Taylor-Davis model (1995), studied the relationship between the components of speed, accuracy, validity, comprehensiveness, completeness, feedback and communication channels with crisis management. The statistical population consists of the entire staff and experts in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan and subsidiary towns which amounts to 760 people. Out of this number, 260 individuals were selected as sample, based on Morgan's table using simple random sampling. Data collection tool for the measurement of statistical population of the study includes 760 employees in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan. Appropriate sample including 260 individuals was selected using Cochran formula and simple random sampling, and organizational communications and crisis management were investigated using a researcher-made questionnaire. Also, Cronbach's alpha with a correlation coefficient of 95% was applied. In order to analyze the data, descriptive statistics including statistical indices (drawing table of frequency, frequency percentage, graphs) and also inferential statistics (horizontal tables, Pearson correlation test and Friedman test) was used. The results show that given the estimated level of significance which is 5%, the correlation concerning the relationship between organizational communications and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan is equal to 0.698. Consequently, there is a relationship between them.

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1. Introduction

Crisis management is a part of business environment and removing all the crises that threaten the organization is impossible. On the other hand, adapting to the existing conditions, accepting competitive environment and enjoying economic mechanisms need some tools to make the most of created opportunities, which is referred to as Crisis Communications Management and Crisis Communications Readiness (Alvani, 1382: 67). Many deficiencies regarding the crisis of organizations indicate that these shortcomings are due to mismanagement of problems and crises with which organizations face (Norton, et. al., 1992: 67). Crisis management enables the organization to eliminate some of the crises, handle some others effectively and take the necessary tool for perfect and rapid learning from crises. Crisis management is an important part of an organization's strategies, which smooths over the path by focusing on don'ts. Communications management allows the organization to act innovatively and creatively and control

the future. Crisis management conveys this implicit message that today's world is based on crisis, and no system is in stable and long-term equilibrium. Thus, although organizations are not able to predict and plan carefully for the future, they must be prepared to overcome known and unknown threats. This preparedness is acquired only through the integration of communications management and crisis management in organizations (Rezaeiyan, 1382: 58). Effective communications in organizations, coordination, planning, systematization, control and other administrative tasks are not realizable without the existence of an effective communication system, and in the absence of such a system, there will be no possibility of managing the organization. Crisis management is considered as an important part in the process of communications management and it is believed that organization, before trying to achieve its goals, must ensure the survival and constancy of its business; so that crisis management is viewed as a part of the public relations activities of the organization, and public relations of an organization is counted as the media inside and outside the

organization when crises arise. Also, a discussion titled "Crisis communications management and the role of media in different stages of crisis life cycle" is brought up (Rabiei, 1385: 43). Appropriate organizational communications leads to providing relevant, accurate, complete, quick and timely information. Given that information plays a significant role in crisis management, the most important action to deal with a crisis is the effective use of communications. Many problems and crises lead to serious material damage. The amount of non-material damage depends to a large extent on the organization attitude during the crisis. Accurate and appropriate communication reduces social damage and maintains the confidence of individuals particularly organization personnel. Improper communication during a crisis can cause suspicion in different parts of an organization (Koster, 2004: 87). Several studies have been done in this regard. For example, Mojarrad (1384) in a study titled "Describing the structure and evaluating the crisis management system in Iran" showed that the four phases of crisis management (mitigation, prevention, readiness and confrontation) must be coordinated in a center at all levels until the relationship between them continues, and the free flow of information and commands maintains properly and easily. Rezaei (1386) in a study titled "National project of crisis management in Iran" demonstrated that although natural crisis management in the world has common theoretical and general stages, design phase and strategic planning especially the executive phase should be developed nationally in each country. Pollard and Hotho (2006) in a research with the title of "Crisis management procedures and processes" concluded that for an organization can move from a defensive state against crisis (confrontation with crisis) to readiness state, it must be dominant over crisis management procedures and processes. Sener (2012) in a study titled "Environmental communication and crisis management" came to the conclusion that the macro environment of an organization divides into three types in terms of change and uncertainty: environmental dynamism, environmental complexity and environmental frequency. Sener stated that managers' perception of environmental changes affect their communicative orientation. Smith (2010) in his research titled "Communicative process and crisis management" demonstrated that the process of communication management and crisis management regarding the evaluation of environmental factors which include the assessment of beneficiaries and the importance of top managers and cooperation between these two groups is similar.

Agricultural Jihad Organization with widespread activities in Iran has the duty of preserving fertile lands and promoting country agriculture and turning it from traditional state into mechanized state and also rehabilitating modern agriculture. Given the drought crisis in this province, potential crises can only be dealt with by efficient organizations which have high efficiency and good communications.

Thus, it is necessary that the main executives and managers of the organization constantly predict effective communication ways for critical situations. Given the importance of communications management and crisis

management, the aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between organizational communications and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan, which examine the components of timely information, complete and appropriate feedback and also proper and quick presentation of information using Taylor and Davis (1955) model whose main characteristic is the role of information and human communications in productivity. The research objectives include:

- Identifying the relationship between timely information and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.
- Identifying the relationship between relevant information and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.
- Identifying the relationship between accurate information and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.
- Identifying the relationship between complete information and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.
- Identifying the relationship between quick presentation of information and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.
- Identifying the relationship between feedback and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.
- Identifying the relationship between communication channels and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.

Methodology

The research method is descriptive-survey and correlational. The statistical population of this study consists of the entire staff and experts in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan and subsidiary towns which amounts to 760 people. Out of this number, 260 individuals were selected as sample, based on Morgan's table using simple random sampling. In order to measure organizational communications, standardized questionnaire of organizational communication (1992) with Likert five-item scale and reliability of 89% was used. Also, standardized questionnaire of Spiegel and Hugh (2001) with the reliability of 85% was applied to estimate crisis management. The validity of this questionnaire has been previously approved and implemented. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency distribution, percentage and mean) and inferential statistics using SPSS software (version 16). Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to determine the normality of variables. Parametric tests were also employed for inferential tests. Besides, Pearson correlation coefficient was used to examine the primary and secondary research hypotheses. And finally, to investigate the relationship between each of the components of organization management and organizational communications, a linear regression model was employed.

Findings

Testing the primary research hypothesis

This hypothesis is related to the relationship between organizational communications and crisis management, which has used Pearson correlation.

Table 1: Results of Pearson correlation coefficient for the primary hypothesis

	Organizational communications	Dependent variable	primary hypothesis
Dependent variable	Pearson correlation coefficient	1	0.834
Crisis management	Level of significance	0	0.00
	number	254	136

Given the amount of correlation (0.834) which is very strong and the lowest level of significance obtained ($\text{sig} = 0.00 < 0.05$) which is smaller than 0.05, it is concluded that the hypothesis is confirmed; that is, there is a significant and positive correlation between communications management

and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.

Testing the first secondary research hypothesis

There is a significant relationship between providing timely information and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.

Table 2: Results of Pearson correlation coefficient for the first secondary hypothesis

	Providing timely information	Dependent variable	First secondary hypothesis
Dependent variable	Pearson correlation coefficient	1	0.691
Crisis management	Level of significance	0	0.00
	number	254	136

This hypothesis is related to the relationship between providing timely information and crisis management, which has used Pearson correlation. Given the amount of correlation (0.691) which is very strong and the lowest level of significance obtained ($\text{sig} = 0.00 < 0.05$) which is smaller than 0.05, we conclude that the hypothesis is confirmed; that

is, there is a significant and positive correlation between providing timely information and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.

Testing the second secondary research hypothesis

There is a significant relationship between providing relevant information and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.

Table 3: Results of Pearson correlation coefficient for the second secondary hypothesis

	providing relevant information	Dependent variable	Second secondary hypothesis
Dependent variable	Pearson correlation coefficient	1	0.763
Crisis management	Level of significance	0	0.00
	number	136	136

This hypothesis is related to the relationship between providing relevant information and crisis management, which has used Pearson correlation. Given the amount of correlation (0.763) which is very strong and the lowest level of significance obtained ($\text{sig} = 0.00 < 0.05$) which is smaller than 0.05, we come to the conclusion that the hypothesis is confirmed; that is, there is a significant and positive

correlation between providing relevant information and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.

Testing the third secondary research hypothesis

There is a significant relationship between providing accurate information and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.

Table 4: Results of Pearson correlation coefficient for the third secondary hypothesis

	Providing accurate information	Dependent variable	Third secondary hypothesis
Dependent variable	Pearson correlation coefficient	1	0.722
Crisis management	Level of significance	0	0.00
	number	136	136

This hypothesis is related to the relationship between providing accurate information and crisis management, which has used Pearson correlation. Given the amount of correlation (0.722) which is very strong and the lowest level of significance obtained ($\text{sig} = 0.00 < 0.05$) which is smaller than 0.05, it is concluded that the hypothesis is confirmed;

that is, there is a significant and positive correlation between providing accurate information and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.

Testing the fourth secondary research hypothesis

There is a significant relationship between providing complete information and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.

Table 5: Results of Pearson correlation coefficient for the fourth secondary hypothesis

	Providing complete information	Dependent variable	Fourth secondary hypothesis
Dependent variable	Pearson correlation coefficient	1	0.756
Crisis management	Level of significance	0	0.00
	number	136	136

This hypothesis is related to the relationship between providing complete information and crisis management, which has used Pearson correlation. Given the amount of correlation (0.756) which is very strong and the lowest level of significance obtained ($\text{sig} = 0.00 < 0.05$) which is smaller than 0.05, it is demonstrated that the hypothesis is confirmed; that is, there is a significant and positive

correlation between providing complete information and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.

Testing the fifth secondary research hypothesis

There is a significant relationship between the quick presentation of information and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.

Table 6: Results of Pearson correlation coefficient for the fifth secondary hypothesis

	Quick presentation of information	Dependent variable	Fifth secondary hypothesis
Dependent variable	Pearson correlation coefficient	1	0.739
Crisis management	Level of significance	0	0.00
	number	254	136

This hypothesis is related to the relationship between the quick presentation of information and crisis management, which has used Pearson correlation. Given the amount of correlation (0.739) which is very strong and the lowest level of significance obtained ($\text{sig} = 0.00 < 0.05$) which is smaller than 0.05, we come to this conclusion that the hypothesis is confirmed; that is, there is a significant and positive

correlation between the quick presentation of information and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.

Testing the sixth secondary research hypothesis

There is a significant relationship between feedback and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.

Table 7: Results of Pearson correlation coefficient for the sixth secondary hypothesis

	Feedback	Dependent variable	Sixth secondary hypothesis
Dependent variable	Pearson correlation coefficient	1	0.041
Crisis management	Level of significance	0	0.00
	number	254	136

This hypothesis is related to the relationship between feedback and crisis management, which has used Pearson correlation. Given the amount of correlation (0.041) which is very weak and the highest level of significance obtained ($\text{sig} = 0.00 < 0.05$) which is smaller than 0.05, we conclude that the hypothesis is not confirmed; that is, there is no

significant correlation between feedback and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.

Testing the seventh secondary research hypothesis

There is a significant relationship between communication channels and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.

Table 8: Results of Pearson correlation coefficient for the seventh secondary hypothesis

	Communication channels	Dependent variable	Seventh secondary hypothesis
Dependent variable	Pearson correlation coefficient	1	0.267
Crisis management	Level of significance	0	0.00
	number	254	136

This hypothesis is related to the relationship between communication channels and crisis management, which has used Pearson correlation. Given the amount of correlation

(0.267) which is at medium level and the lowest level of significance obtained ($\text{sig} = 0.00 < 0.05$) which is smaller than 0.05, it is concluded that the hypothesis is confirmed; that is, there is a significant and positive correlation between

communication channels and crisis management in Agricultural Jihad Organization of North Khorasan.

Table 9: Results of Friedman test with regard to prioritizing the components of organizational communications

chi-square statistic	Degrees of freedom	P - value	Error rate	Test result
36,117	4	0.000	0.01	Hypothesis is confirmed

Friedman test showed that the mean ratings of the components of organizational communications were not much different, and the rate of their impact on improving

the crisis management is close to each other. The mean rate and the ranking of organizational communications components are as follows:

Table 10: Results of Friedman test for ranking the variables of hypotheses.

Variable	Ranking average	rank
Quick presentation of information	6,56	1
Providing timely information	6,30	2
Feedback	6,18	3
Providing accurate information	6,04	4
Providing complete information	5,22	5
Providing relevant information	5,17	6
Communication channels	5,12	7

Discussion and Conclusion

The results show that organizational communications play an important role in the effectiveness of crisis management and in this regard, providing timely, relevant, accurate, complete and quick information affects crisis management of the organization. Information plays a key role in controlling damage during a crisis, and timely access to information is the most important variable in this study. These results are consistent with the findings of Mojarrad(1384), Rezaei (1386), Pollard and Hotho (2006), Smith (2010) and Sener (2012). Therefore, in order for the entire staff to have access to timely information, updated information systems must be used to make decisions.

Also, organizations should pave the way for such systems to be employed in all units and sections. Integration of information systems that are used in an organization is very important. In this connection, by organizing training courses, organizations staff can also become familiar with the method of using these systems and their benefits. Today, life cycle of information has been significantly reduced; so that, yesterday information cannot be much helpful in today's decision-making. Thus, each organizational unit must evaluate its required information periodically and regularly and make necessary reforms in information system to provide the staff and managers with needed information. Also, making timely decisions is more important under conditions of uncertainty and risk than conditions under certainty. Accordingly, organizations must be able to make timely decisions in all circumstances, especially under conditions of uncertainty and risk where quick access to information is of particular importance. Reducing the time of decision-making, timely decisions, avoiding bureaucracy and using different ways to transfer and share information must be given priority. Moreover, communication ways between employees and top managers should be examined until the manner of individuals' communication with main decision makers of the organization in emergency situations becomes clear.

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