

**ACADEMIC PAPER**

The Role of Decision-maker in Crisis Management: A qualitative Study Using Grounded Theory (COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis as A Model)

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The current study seeks to detect the role of decision-maker in crisis management, and to reveal the crisis decision-making process its skills, strategies and stages, as well as, to detecting crisis management. To achieve these aims, we used the grounded theory approach as one of the qualitative research designs, and analyze the data that collected from (15) decision-makers through in-depth interviews. The results revealed that there are eight concepts that develop a broad theory of the crisis decision-making process, they are (a) meaning of the decision, (b) meaning of the crisis decision-making process, (c) stages of the crisis decision-making process, (d) crisis decision-makers' response, (e) crisis management, (f) crisis decision-making strategies, (g) crisis decision-making skills, and (h) the roles of decision-maker in crisis management. From these findings, we generate a theory that explains the crisis decision-making process and its skills and strategies, to benefit decision-makers in making the decisions necessary to confront crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. In light of the findings of the study, we need to pay attention to training decision-makers in the decision-making process in times of crisis, as well as increasing their awareness of the factors affecting crisis decision-making, as well as training them on proactive thinking to save time, effort and money and reduce the severe consequences of crises.

1 | INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The current century is witnessing amazing developments and changes resulting from the information revolution and cultural openness, and this marked all areas of life with the nature of radical transformations. As a result of these developments and challenges, a group of crises emerged, and they became part of the fabric of human life in any society and a feature of contemporary life. The need to deal with crises in the current era is the profound change in science and technology, the pattern of consumption and patterns of relationships between people, which requires new strategies, alternatives and administrative methods to deal with different realities of life, and some have called our modern age as "century of crisis" as the term crisis has become common term in our everyday language

such as economic crisis, social crisis, the education crisis, and other crises (Zamili, 2014).

A human's life has gone through many variables, circumstances, and attitudes that evoke his motivation toward something at the expense of other things, or makes him restricted by choosing an order between a group of things or variables; for the process of voluntary or forced selection, which takes place at the level of individuals, institutions and even societies, as all sectors abound with daily and continuous situations that actually require the selection of an option or an alternative from all available and possible alternatives. It is known administratively for decision-making.

Among the events witnessed in 2020 is the spread of the Corona virus (COVID-19) by its rapid spread and the increase in the number of infections and the number of deaths in all countries of the world. As a result, the Director-General of the World Health Organization

announced on March 11, 2020 that COVID-19 represents Pandemic. Given the seriousness of the results of the COVID-19, countries had to intensify their efforts to confront this pandemic, and put plans to manage this crisis to face its severe economic, health, educational, and social consequences. That is why state institutions are keen to use various strategies that emphasize participation among workers in these institutions and all members of society, and collective decision-makers in thinking and implementation, then follow-up and evaluate. And they are also keen in activating these strategies through forming committees, work teams, organizing data on crises, preparing, and training individuals to face this pandemic and reduce its destructive effects.

The inability of decision-makers to make critical decisions in times of crises and inconsistencies in making them, as well as the lack of efficiency in developing good political standards, lack of skills, in addition to protocols, and the environment that are not supportive of making such decisions in times of crisis, is a matter of concern that may result in heavy losses on all levels, highlighting the need to conduct this study to generate a broad conceptual theory about the role of decision-makers in times of crisis (COVID-19 pandemic as a model) to illustrate how the decision-makers should make positive decisions in crisis, strategies, and skills and roles of them in crisis management.

1.1 | Crisis management

Al-Helou (2011) stated that crisis management is an administrative approach to deal with crisis conditions and to prepare and plan of how to confront them, which is an administrative method that primarily depends on the ability to predict crises and develop scenarios for them through examining and diagnosing weaknesses in administrative organization and placing them under close supervision in anticipation of their explosion and the emergence of a genesis. The science of crisis management as an intermediate field between sociology, psychology, and other social sciences, which led to its development according to the important theoretical development achieved by these sciences, which achieved a similar shift in the field of crisis management so that crisis management became a separate science with its own concepts and theories.

Crisis are events with unknown consequence occurrence, such as the outbreak of COVID-19, which is an inevitable reality that all societies face. affecting its institutions and the safety of its individuals and properties. The crises also include the spread of epidemics and diseases, which calls for immediate, organized, and scientific intervention to confront them in a timely manner before they escalate, and trying to maintain in a situation that guarantees the process of future development and growth in the light of accelerating global challenges. Given the occurrence of crises in countries and their institutions may lead to a disruption in the administrative organization to address these crises, and may lead to a deficiency in dealing with them using traditional or inappropriate methods of crisis management, especially in the absence of prepreparation to face the crisis. This research came to keep the pace with current global events from the spread of the

COVID-19 crisis, and on the other hand to develop a broad conceptual theory explaining the process of managing a pandemic crisis such as COVID-19.

The world today is experiencing extreme events of its impact and complex nature, which increases the great need of decision-makers and wise management. and this research came as an attempt to develop a theory that helps decision-makers in knowing effective strategies that enable them to face and solve modern crisis, which is the COVID-19 pandemic. The study results will help to build a theory in crisis management has made the COVID-19 pandemic into a disaster that can be managed and dealt with effectively.

1.2 | Crisis management theories

In light of the readiness theory, it stresses that organizations that are vulnerable to crises and sudden events should establish willingness to face these crises, define the roles and responsibilities of emergency officials, training and drawing scenarios during these crises. His theory also emphasized the concept of decision-makers, control, coordination, and organizational decentralization in times of crisis as procedures for anticipating or preparing for the unknown without optimism make individuals unable to predict the unknown at the time of these disasters (Quarantelli, 1988; Voogd, 2004; Smith, 2004). Joffe (2003) added that optimistic bias can reduce preparation in coping the crisis. Optimistic decision-makers bias can be perceived falsely that they can control these crisis events.

Likewise, the theory of complexity in crisis management has attempted to provide a way for organizations to manage their crises using behavioral approach, which enables them to reduce complexities and chaos by collecting information about threats. This reflects the skewed optimism in preparedness theory (Mirvis, 1996; Muffet-Willett & Kruse, 2009).

Also the sense-making theory emphasizes the social construct process that occurs at the intersection of contradictory signals and the continuation of individuals' activities, as it involves the development of reasonable meanings that guide and direct people to what they do in times of crisis and abhorrent events (Weick, Sutcliffe, Obstfeld & David, 2005). Weick (1988) added that when individuals and organizations go through a crisis or disaster, they generate understanding by making sense rather than the safe inaction that results in confusion and exacerbates the crisis.

Landau and Chisholm (1995) argue that when confronting crises, institutions should establish disappointment rather than self-deception and vigilance at all times, because optimism may create blind spots that prevent individuals from taking preventive measures that help them adapt to the conditions of the crisis.

1.3 | Crisis decision-making process

Decision is a situation or solution that is put in place to confront problems and is usually formulated in the form of political or legal

discourse. The process of making and taking decisions requires several stages or steps, starting from defining the problem to collecting and classifying information to the status of alternatives, and then to make a better selection in a way that improves decision-makers' efficiency. The circumstances of the crisis make decision relatively different from the ordinary decision, as it requires quickness in finding the alternative and at the same time avoiding improvisation and randomness. As its management scholars call it as a decision of an exceptional nature. Here the process of decision-making depends on the ability and ingenuity of a crisis of the decision-maker to a large extent, and therefore there is a dialectical and influential relationship between effective decision-makers and rational decision-making (Ben Youssef, 2017).

Although a lot of skills can be acquired through learning, it is not easy to learn decision-making, as decision-makers often deal with circumstances of doubt and uncertainty, they are obligated to strive and move quickly and make decisions within a specific time, such as the time of crises, even if arranged. On that, he made some mistakes, because not making a decision is one of the worst mistakes. Horizon amplitude is a fundamental issue in the decision-making process. It is a mobile process, not a static one. The decision-maker must monitor and follow up the results of his decisions to adjust them when needed and in the proper way. On the other hand, decision-making is a process of choosing an alternative from specific alternatives, so the choice may not always be between right and wrong, but may be between methods and methods of work that cannot easily prove the correctness of one of them and other error. Therefore, it is necessary to weigh and prevail over what is likely to be right over what is likely to be wrong as possible, especially in times of crisis (Al-Amiri, 2018).

Before the decision-making process, the decision-maker must ask "is this decision really necessary?" because one of the important alternatives that exist is not to make a decision. The decision is required when there are indications that the situation will deteriorate or that an important opportunity may be lost if it is not taken. Urgent action, and an important element, in decision-making is to determine the issue and what is related to the decision in matters and decide whether there is an urgent need to make that decision quickly or not. By directing all efforts to get to know the truth and details of the topic or a problem that revolves around the decision before its adoption, the choice of style good and effective decision-making does not arise from a narrow mentality, not supposed health style is only one solution and what else wrong. Therefore, it is necessary to take care from the start to understand the issue and to take advantage of the diversity and difference of views around it to ensure that all the essential aspects of the issue are given the appropriate care and attention. Ultimately, what is required of decision-making is that people accept the decision that will be taken and behave responsively with it (Al-Amiri, 2018).

Important and sensitive decisions are those decisions that are taken by decision-makers during times of crisis, whether they are internal or external crises, such as the current crisis of COVID-19, in such crises that allow only specific times to deal with their changing circumstances, and the need for it increases. The influential act, amid

a high degree of suspicion surrounding all options and alternatives presented, and under great psychological pressure from the possibility of deteriorating situation and the failure of the entire process, must make fateful decisions with a degree of clarity and publicity in order to reassure public opinion, and here comes the skill of the decision-maker. When he chooses for an alternative or a successful prospect from the midst of the great potential for failure, despair and frustration, success in such circumstances will serve as a successful transit card to other, more important, larger decisions (Abdul Ridha, 1419).

In fact, policy makers today face a critical time in light of the outbreak of the new epidemic "COVID-19" that is threatening the lives of millions of people all over the world, and which requires urgent and concerted action to confront it and provide appropriate remedial solutions. For him, therefore, state decision-makers must choose the best strategy to deal with this epidemic, and they must spread reassurance in the hearts of their citizens and convince them of the necessity to follow the orders of the authorities, even if this means that they comply with decisions that obligate them to adhere to the social distance and its costs. Therefore, any wrong move could undermine confidence in the authorities and unleash disturbances that would increase the existing risks from the epidemic (Robson, 2020).

Robson (2020) mentioned that through a study by political scientist Erin Bowen of the University of Leiden, the Netherlands, for crises such as the attacks of September 11, 2001, or Hurricane Katrina that swept the United States in 2005, he identified a number of methods or steps that he considered necessary to include any response effective for disasters and crises, where he said that the decision-makers of the countries of the world in this case must quickly realize the danger facing their citizens, and they must also provide the infrastructure and measures necessary to deal with the situation and put them into practice, which is useful in collecting data on the crisis as it occurs without delay, which is known scientifically as "recognizing the nature of the experience that people are going through as they encounter this or that situation" and when the stage for taking practical measures is reached, decision-makers will need to know to what extent depend on the cooperation of citizens through persuasion, and when they must transfer beyond that, after that, the transition to a more rigorous stage, called "command and control," through which to seek to invest all their resources to deal with the crisis, is sought, so resorting to this option is likely to come Backfire if not implemented with sufficient care and caution.

Nevertheless, Bowen found that citizens' confidence in their governments and decision-makers is often ultimately determined based on the communication messages they may receive from these decision-makers in the form of televised statements and speeches, for example, and he says in this regard "Effective decision-makers cannot be achieved in dealing with crises, by simply taking the right actions on the ground." and he points out that in such situations the decision-maker needs to formulate a firm and coherent vision that he explains to his citizens in order to give them a clear picture about the nature of the problem and unify their ranks, if he wishes to obtain what is known as voluntary consensus. The success of the decision-makers in

the attainment of this consensus is vital for them to make better decisions and formulate better policies (Robson, 2020).

Hadley, Pittinsky, Sommer, & Zhu (2011) noted that in normal circumstances, decision-makers have the best solutions to problems, but in times of crisis, such optimal solutions are absent due to time pressure and lack of information, which makes it difficult to develop optimal solutions, which affects confidence in decision-makers. Lubitz, Beakley & Patricelli (2008) tried to set models for decision-making in crises. For example, Santella (2009) developed a model called "Critical Infrastructure Protection Decision Support System", while Hadley et al. (2011) developed a model for a decision-maker's effectiveness during crises.

James and Wooten (2005) indicated that in times of crisis, the complications, ambiguity, lack of insight increase while the ability to make wise decisions decreases. That is why experts and advisors face difficulties in providing advice on the best way for institutions and countries to cope with the crisis. This escalation affects the accuracy of decision-making during crises, and therefore Parashevas (2006) emphasized the need to provide early warning systems and feedback strategies to detect the escalation of the crisis and associated events. Therefore, decision-making must be a renewed and evolving living system in light of the growing crisis.

Crises and disasters are very complex events, and for this we need a scientific thinking method that helps in turning this crisis into a normal problem with possible solutions. Therefore, the qualitative research approach is the most appropriate research method, especially the grounded theory approach to generate a theory that explains the challenges of crisis decision-makers, strategies and skills that they need to control these disasters (COVID-19 pandemic crisis). As a result, our research conducted in-depth interviews to generate a theory in crisis management using a qualitative approach. This is in light of Conger (1998) recommend that a qualitative method is best suited to understand decision-makers in crisis contexts. Consequently, my study conducted an in-depth inductive investigation into these and other directions by using a qualitative research methodology.

From the above, we can say that the decision-making process is complex, and in times of crisis and disasters it is becoming more and more complex, which increases the need for creative and informed decision-makers during crises, such as the COVID-19 crisis.

2 | OBJECTIVES

This study aims to generate a theory about the role of the decision-maker in crisis management, and also seeks to reveal the crisis decision-making process its skills and strategies, factors affecting it, and also to identify the roles of decision-maker in crisis management.

3 | RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach, using the grounded theory approach to extrapolate data from document analysis, using the

emerging design of Glazer (1992). In this design, Glazer stresses the importance of allowing the theory to emerge from the data instead of using specific categories previously used such as those we use in axial coding, and in this design the focus is on linking the categories and the emerging theory and not merely describing the categories (Abu-Allam, 2013).

By using the grounded theory approach to reveal crisis management strategies, data were collected using in-depth interviews and by asking open-end questions to the study's participants, who are in purposive sample (15) of the decision-making officials. The data collected were analyzed qualitatively. As this data will be organized, it will be analyzed after reading several times, classified it into axes and coded openly. Selecting coding will be appropriate to answer the study questions.

The author of this manuscript has complied with ethical principles in their treatment of individuals participating in the research policy described in the manuscript.

Flexible in-depth interviews were made step-wise gradually with the study participants to show different points of view during the data coding and analysis, and thus the theory is generated as the study progresses. To answer the research questions, the coding of the themes collected from the in-depth interviews was compared to the themes drawn from the literature of the theoretical background to answer the study questions. And by the comparison of the codings from the literature with the codings from the data gathered from the study participants, the theory about the crisis administration in COVID-19 crisis was revealed.

The study participants obtained approval to conduct a personal online interview via WhatsApp, Zoom, and phone. The interview with the participants lasted for 2-3 hr, and they were asked open-ended questions on the issue of crisis management. Then we write these interviews, and analyze them using a MAXQADA program. After completing the analysis and coding of the collected data, we was submitted it to one of the interviewed individuals to verify the validity of the results. Using the skills of linking, deduction and notes, an integrated model for managing the pandemic crisis COVID-19 was developed.

Theoretical saturation of data during the analysis process was achieved in the light of what Morse (1995) emphasized through the restrictions of the study sample and the identification of the study fields, and also through the richness of data that is achieved through the depth of the interview, the accuracy and quality of the interview questions addressed to the participants and from the flexibility of the data gathering process.

4 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In light of the research questions, aims and objectives, the data collected in this study by applying in-depth interviews from the participants was read many times to reveal the meaningful quotations, after that the codes and memos were established by using a MAXQADA program. The results of a qualitative data analysis yielded the following results:

There are eight crisis the decision-making concepts, were (a) meaning of decision, (b) meaning of the crisis decision-making process, (c) stages of the crisis decision-making process, (d) crisis decision-making's response; (e) crisis management; (f) crisis decision-making strategies, (g) decision-making skills; (h) the role of decision-maker in crisis.

4.1 | Meaning of decision

The analysis of the interviewees' responses reflected that decision is one of the top thinking skills, it refers to a deliberate bill of choice for one of the available alternatives available, is carried out according to an expanded analysis of all aspects of the situation or the problem of the decision, and the decision-making process is a knowledge process carried out by decision-makers in natural and catastrophic circumstances, based on his experience, the situation, and the nature of the event.

4.2 | Meaning of crisis decision-making process

Interviewees added the crisis decision-making means choose an approach, method, or mechanism for behavior from a number of alternatives and options that are available, or is the opinion of someone who has the choice and export it. Thus the crisis decision-making process from the interviewees' point of view is characterized by an expanded and analytical process of comparison, aimed to choosing one alternative from a set of available and proposed alternatives to achieve a goal or a group of goals in proportion to the elements of the situation and its factors. The results showed that crises and disasters affect the decision-makers' decision-making process, and the responding to the crisis, depend on the decision-maker's awareness of the event, his efficiency in making decisions in these circumstances and the effect of his decisions.

The interviewees' responses reflected that the crisis decision-making process is one of the complex thinking processes that aim to choose the best alternative, or the best and most suitable solution to achieve the goal in a way that suits the characteristics of the situation, and the diversity of alternatives. It is a state of imbalance to choose the most appropriate and most successful solution in reaching the goal based on the initial information studied, in pursuit of diagnostic skills, exploring and evaluating all possible alternatives, then implementing them with a preplanned process, then evaluating the results of the decision selected and evaluated. Entering into a crisis means getting into a circle of the unknown, and therefore decision-making in managing the crisis becomes difficult, and varies according to the severity and scope of the crisis, its depth and expectation. Expected crisis is easily and accurately decided by extending the crisis, generating ideas, analyzing and evaluating ideas, and then implementing ideas. As for the unexpected crises, it is difficult to take decisions because they need quick decisions in light of the events, lack of time and lack of information. Each crisis has its own

characteristics, which require a specific method to manage and address them, but all crises are subject to common standards and elements in planning them effectively and well prepared to avoid falling into them, or mitigate their negative effects and increase the chances of transferring their effects to the benefit of the institution.

As a preview, the data from the individuals interviewed, reflected that the decision-making process in COVID-19 pandemic crisis require skills, trust of the decision-maker, brave, sufficient information about the crisis. Thus, the crisis decision-making process affected by five factors, which are as follows (see Figure 1):

- 1 Lack of professional competence for decision-makers.
- 2 Fear of the consequences of decision-making at a time of crisis.
- 3 Lack of decision-making skills.
- 4 Lack of others confidence about the decisions made.
- 5 Lack of information.

The study participants mentioned that decision-making in the COVID-19 crisis means the choice that meets the approval and preference of the director or decision-maker, after exposing the COVID-19 crisis situation to analysis and diagnosis, and determining what behaviors to do to benefit the situation, and what must be left to avoid the negative effects of it.

The participants' answers reflect the importance of decision-making in general and the time of crises, especially the COVID-19 crisis in the aspects of planning and setting goals, policies and strategies that the organization pursues or adopts to reflect its identity, aspects of its competence, and spatial and temporal limits to overcome the COVID-19 crisis, and the importance of making decisions in light of Corona's crisis in defining institutions for their inputs and resources, drawing methods and mechanisms governing their work and operating systems, and building the appropriate structural and organizational

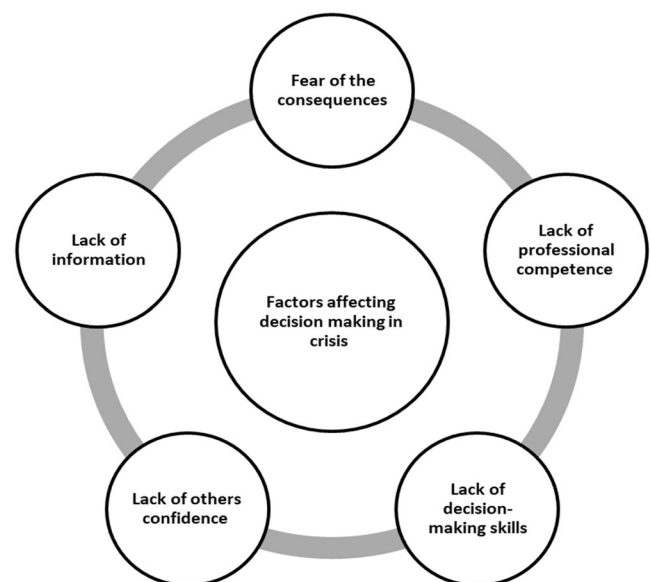


FIGURE 1 The factors affecting decision-making process in crisis

ladder for their activities and capabilities, and the decision-making aspect of oversight and control circles is not neglected adequately dealing with performance measurement and evaluation of business, and the consequent corrective alternative pathways and plans, you need to give priority to interests in accordance with the available alternatives due behaviors or emergency situations.

4.3 | Stages of the crisis decision-making process

The decision-making process proceeds in a clear and smooth hierarchy, as this process is divided into five phases, for each stage a number of procedures and steps that must be followed to reach the individual to the right decision, which returns to him with the correct consequences and good results, and the stages (see Figure 2) will be mentioned as follows:

A. *Defining and diagnosing the problem.* This stage is considered one of the most important stages that the individual must be careful and proficient in its performance. Defining the problem and diagnosing it is a sensitive stage that results in the progress of all the coming stages, so the error in this stage leads to failure in all the steps that follow, whatever the level of accuracy in selection, and the problem arises from the difference between the current situation and the situation that is supposed to be reached, and the location of the defect must be determined in an accurate and clear manner and how it relates to other aspects of the current situation, and the problems vary according to their nature, so they may be urgent problems, or routine problems.

B. *Alternatives the right decision.* It depends on obtaining the largest possible amount of data and data towards the proposed solution. After confirming the existence of the problem and determining it accurately, the process of selecting alternatives begins, collecting the necessary and available information on most of the proposed options and solutions, and studying its advantages, disadvantages and results.

The consequences arising when choosing one of them, and the nature of the solutions and alternatives vary according to the difference in the problem or the time in which it appeared, and the information may be preliminary collected by direct communication or field visits, and the information may be quantitative and qualitative that contain numbers and statistics, and may be in the form of opinions, facts and experiences provided by the owners of experience. The consultants and their views on a specific problem or situation, all of which, are to reach the appropriate solution to the problem and make the right decision.

C. *Scientific evaluation of the alternatives and choosing the best ones.* When collecting information about the appropriate solutions and offering ideas and previous experiences about them, and consulting. For an experience in its field, the individual becomes familiar with all the negatives, positives, strengths, and weaknesses of each alternative, and the choice must be settled between at least two alternatives, and one is preferred over the other according to a comparison in which the advantages and additions of each alternative are evaluated, and are not neglected in this case comparing faults, which will result in a logical decision with more advantages and fewer faults, based on measuring and forecasting the effects of each alternative.

D. *Choosing the appropriate alternative.* After the process of gathering information, identifying solutions, offering options, and studying the positive and negative consequences that will follow, in addition to making sure that the need meets all the requirements of solving the problem with more benefit and less harm, the final and proper choice of one of the appropriate alternatives becomes an important requirement in the decision-making process, after the completion of the final image of the solutions comes the individual's role in the choice, then preparing for the implementation process.

E. *Implementing and evaluating the decision and following it after the process of choosing.* The appropriate alternative comes the implementation process, followed by the beginning of the effects arising from the results, whether negative or positive, and the emergence of strengths and weaknesses, and the start of the process of assessing the results, and how efficient they are in meeting the requirements that were set for them, and in the event that the desired results are not achieved must be restructured alternative decisions and corrective; fill the gaps occurring, and to find alternatives and appropriate solutions again.

We deduce that decision-making means choosing from alternatives to solve a problem or face a crisis, such as a COVID 19-pandemic. This process passes through several stages: identifying the problem or crisis and collecting information about it, identifying alternatives to overcome this crisis, studying these alternatives and analyzing them, choosing the best and most successful alternative, implementing the decision, then evaluating this decision that was taken.

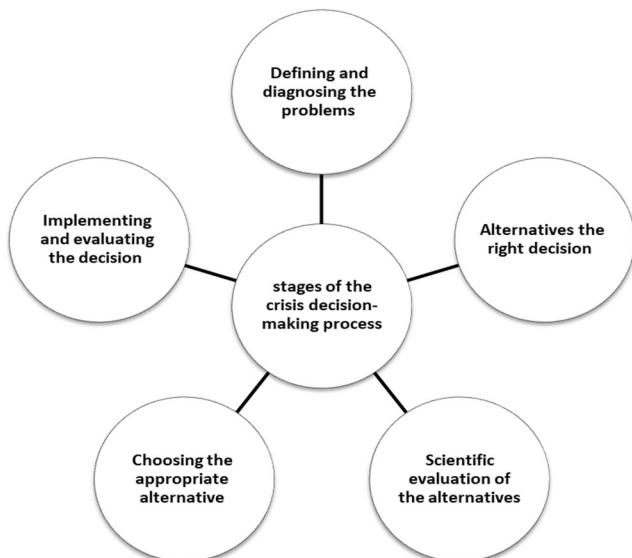


FIGURE 2 Stages of the crisis decision-making process

4.4 | Crisis decision-maker's response

The participants' answers reflect that there is no doubt that the way the decision-maker responds to the crisis affects the work

environment on the one hand and employees on the other. Either the decision-maker's response leads to a reduction in the work pressure associated with the crisis and the empowerment of workers to provide services effectively, or his response to the crisis increases the work pressure and impedes the performance of workers and the provision of services to those who benefit from them. The decision-maker needs sufficient information to respond effectively to crises and deal positively with them, relieving stress and severity of the crisis. The participants added that the decision-maker must be coherent, calm, patients, available to all, not exposing himself to risks and threats, ensuring that he is at the top of the situation, prevention and identifying resources to respond to the crises facing the community or institution. Moreover, including contact information with the formed crisis management teams.

4.5 | Crisis management

The participants mentioned that crisis management such as the COVID-19 pandemic crisis requires the decision-maker to have the patience and wisdom to manage it. In crises, the decision-maker must work with what happened and with what has not yet happened. Decision-maker must analyze and study the crisis in an integrated method, in order to get out of it with minimal losses and disrupt future crises that may result from the current crisis, through effective confrontation and planning. Crisis management also requires decision-maker to take a set of precedes including:

- a Form a crisis management team, and engage employees in discussions about how to manage a crisis.
- b Preparing an implementation plan for crisis management.
- c Hotlines for the Crisis Management Team.

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis requires decision-makers in all institutions to make quick decisions, because such outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic threatens the goals and values of the institutions and parties involved, and the loss of control over events, causing anxiety as a result of a lack of information and an element of surprise and entanglement in matters during the crisis occurs. Therefore, managing the COVID-19 pandemic crisis means preserving the assets and properties of institutions and achieving revenues, as well as preserving individuals and workers in these institutions against various risks. That is why the role of decision-makers at this difficult time for the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis is clearly evident in the search for potential risks that have resulted or result from this pandemic and try to avoid them or mitigate their effects on the organization if they are not able to avoid them completely. The management of the COVID-19 crisis means overcoming this crisis and the resulting crises by other scientific and administrative tools, avoiding its negatives and benefiting from its positives, to achieve balance and adapting to the various local and global variables and examining their effects and consequences in all fields. These findings agreed with the results of Kayode, Mojeed, and Fatai (2014) indicated that participatory decision-makers

style and consultative decision are the most favorite. As well as, Miller and Monge (1988) emphasized the participation in the decision-making process.

The participants also added that in order for the decision-maker to manage the crisis, he must contain the damage and implement the preventive plans to prevent the crisis from worsening and spreading. This is what happened in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, from taking a decision on home quarantine to reduce the spread of the virus, and working remotely for all administrative agencies. As a result, decision-makers must learn from the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, and from here on out to be on the alert, energetic, to cope with the bad and catastrophic possibilities that may occur at any time. We must address the existing imbalance in the Arab countries in the crisis management system, as the efforts being made in the Arab countries toward the COVID-19 pandemic crisis are remedial efforts rather than preventive to face any expected or unexpected crisis. This necessitates the decision-makers in the Arab countries to use modern methods to deal with crises such as worst case scenario virtual reality or future studies and to imagine the worst crises and develop scenarios for their solutions. The Malaysian experience in managing crises such as Hajj disasters showed the usefulness of the virtual reality system.

4.6 | Crisis decision-making strategies

The responses of the participants in the study during the in-depth interviews with them, they explained that decision-making in times of crisis requires that systems of institutions move toward decentralization of decision-making. What helps in making decisions during crises is good planning of crisis management and testing of objective and realistic solutions, in addition to forecasting and its important role in taking preventive measures against crises and disasters. There are various strategies that decision-makers take when making decisions in times of crisis, which differ with the personality of the decision-maker on the one hand, and the size, severity, and nature of the disaster or crisis on the other, including:

- 1 Decision-making intuition strategy.
- 2 Leave the decision to fate. And leave things as they will turn out.
- 3 Rush strategy.
- 4 Agree and make decisions similar to what others have taken.
- 5 Procrastination and delaying decision-making as soon as possible.
- 6 Leave the decision to those with the highest and most experienced responsibility.
- 7 Think about all solutions and develop alternatives based on the information gathered about the crisis.
- 8 Planning, monitoring, and evaluation strategy.

The study participants added that decision-makers must set a deadline for decision-making. Because the longer the duration the more severe consequences of the crisis, the availability of information on the crisis is important, but the more information the more complex

decision-making, and therefore the decision-maker must set a time limit for decision-making so as not to increase the damage of the crisis. The decision-makers' delay in making decisions about the COVID-19 pandemic crisis on the pretext of collecting more information may exacerbate the crisis and its risks at all levels. Making a decision is much better than leaving the crisis without making any decisions about it. Decision-makers must leave emotions aside, then leave the mind to act, think, decide, and decide without hesitation, fear, and anxiety and ignoring all that is negative. The decision-maker's success in making the most successful decisions in a crisis situation depends on his wisdom and intelligence. The results of the study conducted by Ejimabo (2015) showed that good decisions made by decision-makers lead to success and achievement of goals, while bad decisions complicate the crisis and have severe consequences.

4.7 | Crisis decision-making skills

The decision-making process requires from the decision-maker to cognitive and supra-cognitive thinking skills of analysis, composition, evaluation and other important and necessary skills, as well as decision-makers need creative thinking skills to make critical and effective decisions in disaster and crisis management. Like what we face in making decisions about the COVID-19-outbreak. From the opinions of the research participants they mentioned during their in-depth interview, the following skills were developed for decision-making in times of crisis (e.g., a pandemic crisis COVID-19).

- 1 The skill of collecting information about the crisis.
- 2 The skill of developing alternatives and possible solutions to the crisis.
- 3 The skill of comparison and choosing among the available alternatives to face the crisis.
- 4 The skill of predicting the consequences of possible solutions and alternatives.
- 5 The skill of analysis, correlation, and conclusion.
- 6 Evaluation skill for the results of solutions taken to face the crisis.
- 7 Diagnostic skill for the current situation.
- 8 Effective communication skills with the parties to the crisis.
- 9 The skill of solving problems using traditional and creative methods.
- 10 Critical thinking skills.

These findings agreed with Jung (1971) that the human when he makes a decision to solve problems is guided by sensing, thinking, understanding, judging. Thus Jung reported that there are two ways to solve any crisis either thinking or feeling functions. Barrett, Balloun, and Weinstein (2005), p. 214 defined decision-making as the process of using critical thinking skills to make optimize a decision. As well as, Cabrera, Ortega, and Cabrera (2003) reported the importance of the communication skills in decision-making process with the employees to encourage them to express and sharing their ideas to make the decision.

The participants in the study indicated that the decision-making process is affected by a number of factors, including what relates to the personality of the decision-maker or the decision-maker, ethical values of honesty, loyalty, reliability, and consistency, as well as the decision-maker decision-making affect by external and internal environmental factors associated with the crisis for which decisions are made, also the time during which the decision is made, and the style of decision-makers whether autocratic does not allow the participation of others in the process decision-making, or a participative who appreciates the participation of others in the decision-making process. This is consistent with the findings of the Ejimabo (2015a) that there are many factors affecting the decision-making process such as experience, cognitive biases, age, personality. And also agreed with the study of Murphy (2005) that there are three types of decision-makers that influence the decision-making process: autocratic, participative, and delegative or laissez-faire decision-makers style. And also agreed with the results of the study conducted by Ejimabo (2015b) that emphasized the moral and ethics in decision-makers decision-making process.

The participants added that what hinders the decision-making process in times of crisis, the lack of decision-makers' competencies, lack of preparation for decision-making, central in decision-making, lack of awareness of the importance of delegation, lack of information, lack of confidence from others in decisions made in times of crisis, and suspicion and doubt about the decisions that are taken. This deficiency in decision-making process requires developing the skills of decision-makers in the Arab countries, especially in times of crises and disasters, as a COVID-19 pandemic crisis to empower decision-makers to make good decisions in the times of crisis. This is confirmed by the results of the Ejimabo (2015a) study of the great need to change and improve the decision-making process between decision-makers and managers as a result of globalization, technological development, the need for teamwork, and to increase the effectiveness of decision-makers.

Therefore, the results of the study of Ejimabo (2015b) recommended that decision-makers in subordinate skilled organizations should be involved in the decision-making process because this increases the acceptance of the decision that will be taken on the crisis, and on the other hand it increases the quality of decisions. As, Al Eid et al. (2020) mentioned "decision-maker is important, as it serves as a link between employees, the organization's plans and future visions. And because it is the melting pot in which concepts, policies, and strategies are fused, controlling problems and crises within the institution and developing solutions to treat them" (p.2).

4.8 | The roles of decision-maker in crisis management

The study participants reported their opinion on the roles of decision-maker in crisis management such as the pandemic crisis COVID-19, as they mentioned that crisis management depends on the efforts made by decision-makers, efforts and their roles. The decision-maker's role

FIGURE 3 Roles of decision-maker in crisis management

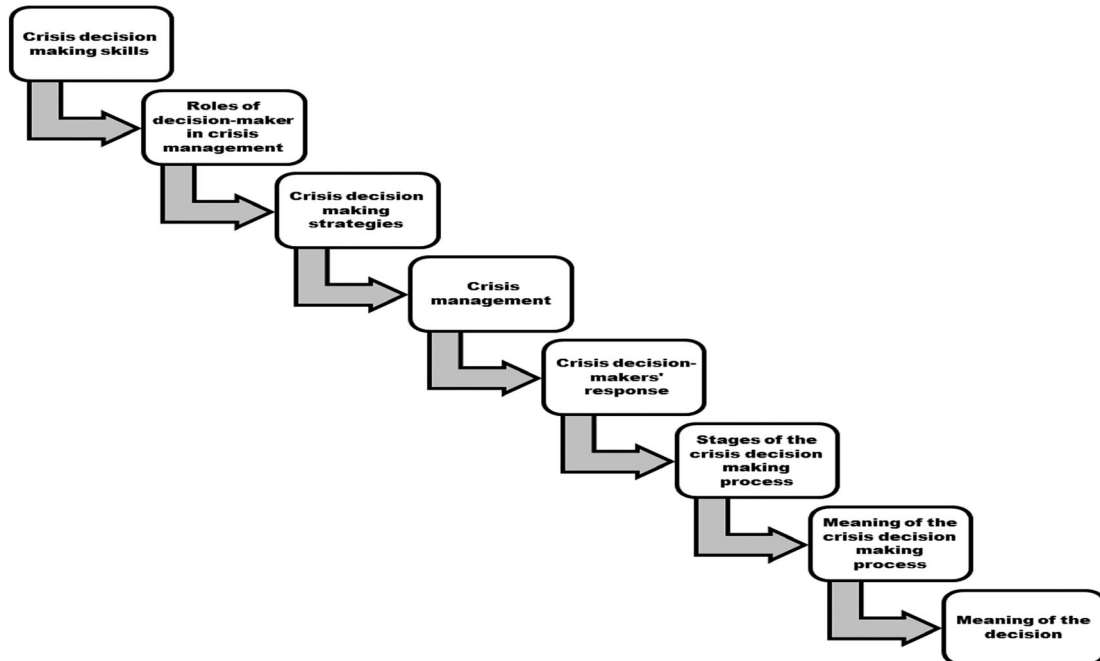
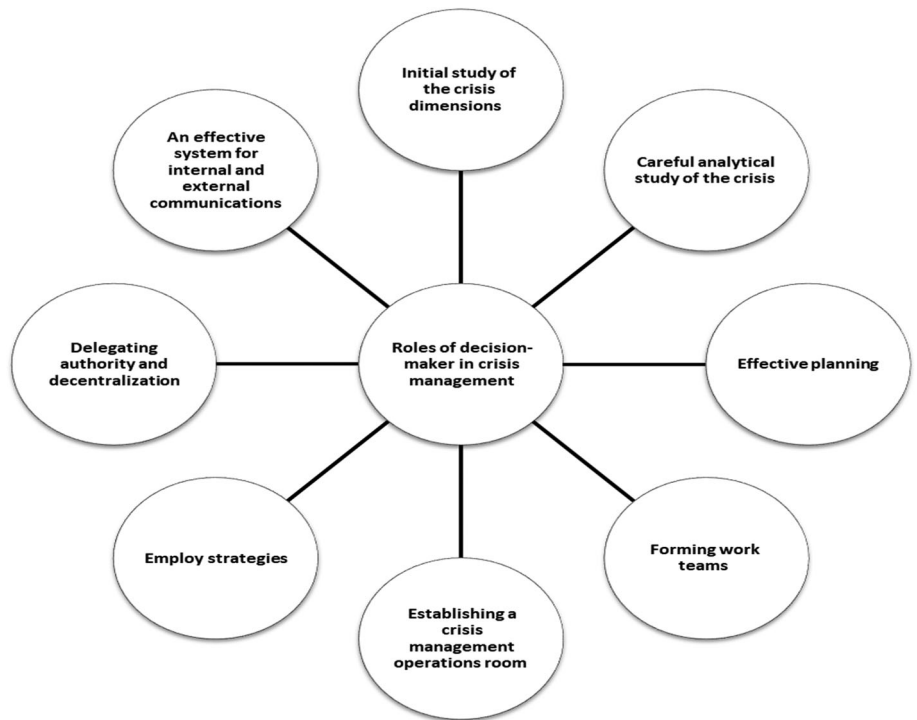


FIGURE 4 Theoretical concepts of the decision-maker roles in crisis management' theory

in managing the crisis depends on the different stage of the crisis, whether the crisis is in its initial stages, that is, the birth of the crisis, and here it works to vent or ignore this crisis. Or in the stage of maturity and the crisis becomes extremely violent, where he failed to manage it at the birth stage because of ignorance, arrogance, and self-locking, and here the crisis may overthrow the decision-maker,

institution and society. Or the crisis may be in the stage of disappearance. Each of these stages requires the crisis to have mechanisms to deal with it, and then the roles of the decision-maker in each stage differ according to the severity and nature of the crisis.

The study participants pointed to a number of roles that decision-makers (see Figure 3) must be doing it to confront the crises:

- 1 Initial study of the dimensions of the crisis and the common factors in the occurrence of the crisis, then determining the starting point for the confrontation.
- 2 Careful analytical study of the crisis in all its dimensions, the parties involved in the crisis and the role of their respective contributions.
- 3 Effective planning to confront and deal with the crisis in modern scientific methods.
- 4 Forming work teams of specialists and experts.
- 5 Establishing a crisis management operations room with an efficient high-level technical communication system.
- 6 An effective system for internal and external communications, to transfer information to and from the decision maker to make decisions quickly, accurately and decisively.
- 7 Delegating authority and decentralization to provide accuracy and speed in making decisions in a timely manner before the crisis worsens.
- 8 Employ strategies to effectively confront the crisis, whether it is strategies for external and internal destruction and overcoming the crisis, or a strategy to stop growth and accept the de facto effort to prevent its deterioration and not reaching the situation of the explosion, or a strategy of adequate and accurate analysis of factors affecting crises and breaking up the crisis into small crises with less pressure, which facilitates deal with it, or a thought-busting strategy for the crisis. Or a strategy to change the course of the crisis from the natural path to paths away from the direction of the crisis, and then to ensure good results.

In all stages of the crisis, decision-makers must have resilience and wisdom in order to have effective and successful roles in crisis management, maximize crisis management capabilities, control of alternatives to face the crisis, control and control of crisis management teams and their executive elements. All of these may reduce the amount of material and human losses, as in the management of the COVID- 19 pandemic crisis now.

5 | CONCLUSION

This qualitative study focuses on identifying the decision-making in crisis. From the analysis of the participants' answers, a theory about the decision-making process in times of crisis and a pandemic crisis, COVID-19 models, was generated. This theory consists of the following concepts: meaning of decision, meaning of the decision-making process, stages of the decision-making process, crisis decision-makers' response, crisis management, crisis decision-making strategies, decision-making skills, which may constitute a starting point for developing training programs to develop decision-makers' ability to make decisions in times of crisis and disaster. Thus, we need future studies on decision-making in times of crisis, the factors affecting it, its skills and steps, using other qualitative methodological designs, as well as quantitative designs. This is in addition to the need for studies on the

effectiveness of decision-makers' training programs on decision-making skills in times of crisis.

From all these findings, we developed the following theory (see Figure 4) of the decision-maker roles in crisis management (COVID-19 pandemic as a model), that contains eight theoretical concepts, as follows:

6 | RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the results of this study, we recommended that:

- 1 Training decision-makers in the decision-making process.
- 2 Increase awareness of the decision-makers about the factors that influence decision-making.
- 3 Developing the skills needed to make decisions in times of crisis.
- 4 Developing decision-makers awareness of the importance of employee participation in the decision-making process,
- 5 Developing effective communication and listening skills for decision-makers.
- 6 Training decision-makers in critical and creative thinking that help them in decision-making in times of crisis and disaster.
- 7 Training decision-makers on two types of thinking skills for cope the crisis: thinking in order to remedy the crisis after its occurrence and perhaps after its recurrence, and the second is thinking to avoid the occurrence of the crisis so preemptive thinking here prevents the crisis from occurring. Because the proactive thinking benefits in saving time, effort, money, and prevents the consequences of the crisis, and reduce the heavy losses that may result from the crisis.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors of this manuscript declares that they have no conflict of interests.

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