İletişim Kuram ve Araştırma Dergisi - Sayı 46 / Bahar 2018
Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli Üniversitesi
İletişim Fakültesi
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E-ISSN: 2147-4524

Measuring the Effectiveness of Organizational Public Relations: An Experimental Research on Crisis Response Strategies

Kurumsal Halkla İlişkilerin Etkinliğini Ölçme: Kriz Müdahale Stratejileri Üzerine Deneysel Bir Araştırma

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Keywords:

Public Relations, Crisis Communication, Relationship Management, Corporate Reputation, Crisis Response Strategies.

Abstract

In this study, the effects of organization-public relationship and crisis communication strategies on audience perception and attitudes during a crisis have been investigated experimentally. In the context of the research, an university in Turkey was selected as the organization and students were selected as target groups, and Coombs' situational crisis communication theories have been tested an experimental study carried out with 97 students. Students were divided into 8 groups according to different corporate reputation and relational satisfaction perceptions; a crisis situation was created, and a different crisis communication strategy was applied to each group. According to the research results, no matter what the thoughts were before the crisis, crisis communication strategy doesn't reduce the responsibility of the organization in crisis, and it doesn't affect the minds of the audience, but the perception of corporate reputation and sense of relational satisfaction affect the credibility and confidence of the organization's words and actions. Regardless of the corporate reputation and relational satisfaction, the strategy of denying the crisis gave the highest accusation score, and the messages given to reduce the negative consequences of the crisis were found effective within each group. The reason for this is that participants weren't concerned about the cause of the crisis; they were concerned only with the messages to reduce the harmful effects of the crisis.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Halkla İlişkiler, Kriz İletişimi, İlişki Yönetimi, Kurumsal İtibar, Kriz Müdahale Stratejileri

Öz

Bu çalışmada, kurumsal halkla ilişkiler ve kriz müdahale stratejilerinin bir kriz esnasında hedef kitle algılamaları ve tutumları üzerindeki etkileri deneysel olarak incelenmiştir. Araştırma kapsamında, kuruluş olarak Türkiye'de bir üniversite, hedef kitlesi olarak ise mevcut öğrencileri seçilmiştir ve Coombs'un durumsal kriz iletişim teorileri deneysel olarak 97 öğrenci üzerinde test edilmiştir. Öğrenciler farklı kurumsal itibar algısı ve ilişkisel memnuniyet duygusuna göre 8 gruba ayrılmış, bir kriz durumu oluşturulmuş ve her gruba farklı bir kriz iletişim stratejisi uygulanmıştır. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre kriz öncesindeki düşünceler her ne olursa olsun, kriz iletişim stratejilerinin kuruluşun krizdeki sorumluluğunu azaltmadığı ve hedef kitlelerin düşüncelerini etkilemediği, ancak kurumsal itibar algısının ve ilişkisel memnuniyet duygusunun kuruluşun söz ve eylemlerine olan inandırıcılığı ve güveni etkilediği sonucu bulunmuştur. Kurumsal itibar algısı ve ilişkisel memnuniyet duygusundan bağımsız olarak, inkar etme stratejisi en yüksek suçlama atfı puanını verirken, krizin olumsuz sonuçlarını azaltmak için verilen mesajlar ise her bir grup içinde en etkili strateji olarak bulunmuştur. Bunun nedeni, katılımcıların krizin neden ortaya çıktığıyla ilgilenmemeleri, sadece krizin zararlı etkilerini azaltmak için verilen mesajlarla ilgilenmeleridir.

Çelebi E., (2018) "Measuring the Effectiveness of Organizational Public Relations:An Experimental Research on Crisis Response Strategies", Journal of Communication Theory & Research 46, pp. 275-290

Introduction

It is not desirable to think about the possibility of encountering a crisis situation because no organization likes to face a crisis situation. However, preventing or managing crisis or getting through crisis successfully is crucial for communication practitioner.

Many researchers from different disciplines have proposed different methods that organizations should get ready to crisis situations. The most important of these conclusions is that the organizations should attach importance to their reputation through proactive work to be carried out in a planned way before the crisis and to increase the stakeholders' relationship with the organization with the positive relations to be established with internal and external stakeholders. During the crisis, recommendations have been made for establishments to maintain communication with their internal and external stakeholders and to inform them about the cause of the crisis, the current situation and possible consequences. However, the effects of crisis communication strategies should be examined on these situational factors, such as corporate reputation and relational satisfaction, one by one in order to reach a consequence.

"Corporate Reputation" and "Relational Satisfaction" As Purposes of Public Relations Applications

According to Laufer and Coombs (2006: 380), corporate reputation, which contains many different elements, is generally described as *"an overall evaluation that reflects the extent to which people see the firm as good or bad."* Corporate reputation is an universal value that applies to all organizations. It is also difficult to imitate the reputation. Public relations practitioners are responsible for establishing a good reputation and protecting this reputation. For this, first of all, it is necessary to act in accordance with the target group relations, that is to say, to attach importance to the people and to the values of the establishment. Organizations must develop policies that are appropriate to their's vision to make their existing corporate reputation more positive or to improve their negative reputation. Because, a strong corporate reputation enhances the satisfaction of the organization's stakeholders, earning the target audience loyalty, and contributing to the success by increasing positive attitudes towards organizations.

According to Vercic and Vercic (2007: 287), *"Corporate reputation is a valuable construct for summarising evaluation of past corporate behavior and for strategic purposes. Managers use it in an attempt to manage relations between internal and external stakeholders"*. For this reason, public relations have contributed both to relational satisfaction and to the effectiveness of corporate reputation. Therefore, organizations should work in harmony with these two objectives instead of focusing separately on target audience associations and organizations. However, as it could be seen in the methodology of this study, organizational satisfaction levels of the target groups and corporate reputation perceptions towards the organization could be different.

From the point of view of relational satisfaction, it is necessary to mention Cutlip et al.'s (1994: 2) definition of relations with the public: "*the management function that*

establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the public on whom its success or failure depends." Ledingham and Bruning (1998: 62) relate to the organizational public relations: "*the state that exists between an organization and its key public that provides economic, social, political, and/or cultural benefits to all parties involved, and is characterized by mutual positive regard."* Ledingham (2003: 190) stated that "*Effectively managing organizational–public relationships around common interests and shared goals, over time, results in mutual understanding and benefit for interacting organizations and public."* Furthermore, according to Dozier and Broom (1995: 23), "*The emergence of public relations as a true profession rests on benefits that professional practices provide society as a whole."* So we can say that the appropriate term for the desired relational end result for applying target audience associations is 'public relations.' According to Yang and Taylor (2013: 260) *"public relations, especially its relationship with the management function, directly contributes to the accumulation of social capital."* Social capital generates trust for social interactions.

Public Relations practitioners are responsible for how good corporate reputation and relational satisfaction are to be established. However, these attitudes are the result of highly complex perceptions (e.g. past experiences, expectations, benefits). Therefore, all the factors that can influence the perception of these attitudes need to be understood thoroughly. Nevertheless, the importance of these attitudes cannot be understood until a serious threat is uncovered when considering crisis communication. The time to understand the importance of these attitudes is the crisis situation that will constitute the research of this study.

Organization-Public Relationship and Crisis Communication

According to Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer (1998: 233) crisis are *"specific, unexpected, and non-routine events or series of events that create high levels of uncertainty and threaten or are perceived to threaten an organization's high priority goals*." Coombs (2007a: 164) argues that *"a crisis is a sudden and unexpected event that threatens to disrupt an organization's operations and poses both a financial and a reputational threat. Crisis can harm stakeholders physically, emotionally and/or financially".* In the field of crisis management and communication, many theoretical and practical types of research have been carried out from past to present. Ha and Riffe (2015: 569), who studied crisis research between 1992 and 2011, found that *"crisis research in communication has been more interdisciplinary in terms of theory and authorship."* In fact, authors state that *"business has been more interdisciplinary in terms of methods."* Despite these interdisciplinary methods, it can be said that crisis communication is primarily the work of the practitioners of the public relations. In their work, Reber and Berger (2006: 235) found that professionals in public relations were influential in times of crisis when they prepared crisis messages and plans. Because of this, the practitioners in relation to the people interact with the senior management in making strategic decisions and are perceived as technicians. On the other hand, Sandman (2006: 262) notes that crisis communication specialists should not be considered crisis managers. However,

communication experts who will take part in the crisis team should contribute to the planning of crisis communication strategies, designing important messages, developing strategies and tactics, time management and budget planning.

According to Coombs and Holladay (2001: 339), researchers in crisis management have emphasized the importance of establishing and maintaining quality relations before the crisis. For this, initially, it is necessary to measure the quality of relations with internal and external stakeholders and corporate reputation and strengthen these if there is a weakness. However, it should not be forgotten that the relations before the crisis, in the time of crisis and the post-crisis period may differ. For, Jina et al. (2014: 509)'s research shows that *"the underlying processes of publics' emotions felt in crisis situations are different from those felt in non-crisis situations."*

Crisis Communication Strategies

The crisis may occur at an unexpected time, and urgent intervention may be required. Moreover, pressure and stress caused by the crisis can cause panic and prevent effective work in times of crisis. Therefore, crisis communication strategies need to be determined before the crisis, and the risks and consequences of these communication strategies needed to be estimated. Actions towards crisis communication strategies should be strengthened psychologically. A crisis communication plan, guide, procedure and policy for these strategies should be identified. According to Heide and Simonsson (2014: 137), a good crisis communication strategy can be more important than a crisis plan.

Verhoeven et al. (2014: 107) conducted a survey in 43 countries in Europe, and found that in during the crisis "*Organizational response and image restoration approaches are mainly based on information, sympathy and defense strategies*".

According to Huang and Su's (2009: 30) there are four important factors in determining the crisis intervention strategy during a crisis. These are strategic orientation, public relations autonomy, legal dominance, and organizational factors. According to Huang (2008: 303), crisis intervention refers to how crisis messages are presented, and there are three main themes in the literature; timely response, consistent response and active response. Despite this strategy, Jin et al. (2012: 291) argue that corporate strategies should appeal not only intellectually, but emotionally, otherwise, strategies would be ineffective.

Coombs (2007b: 135) defines post-crisis communication as "*all that management says and does after a crisis.*" According to the author, selecting an effective crisis communication strategy can help an organization in the event of a crisis to suffer no or minimal damage. Therefore, the interventions that should be made during the management of crisis or when the damage caused by the crisis is repaired should be related to the crisis communication strategy. For this, strategies should be considered for different crisis types. Strategies should be developed for the classification of crisis types and for a different intervention strategy in accordance with each classification. Tennert's (2014: 422) research suggests that "*attribution theory can be productively applied to questions of communication management*."

Coombs (2007b:137) stated: "*Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) applies attribution theory based ideas to a wider array of crisis*." It's based on the assumption that people will want to know why the crisis is caused. Because, people want to know the responsibility and the responsible person in crisis. This helps them to understand the situation. According to Coombs (2015: 142-143), there is a strong link between self-defense discourse and the creation and development of crisis communication strategy.

Coombs (2015) provides a theoretical approach to suggesting strategies that organizations should follow in their response to the crisis. According to Coombs (2015: 144-145), "*this guidance represents not best practices but rather insights regarding which crisis response strategies can be beneficial in a particular crisis and which can actually make the crisis situation worse.*"

Coombs (2007, 2015) divided crisis communication strategies into four groups. These strategies suggest specific ways of attributing responsibility. The strategy of **"denial"** aims to abolish the link between the organization and the crisis. This includes a simple denial and a scapegoating strategy. The "**reducing offensiveness"** strategy tries to reduce the burden of responsibility for the organization and reduce the negative effects of the crisis on the organization. Just like finding an excuse and justifying it. The **"bolstering"** strategy aims to build a positive link between the organization and the target audience. The organization is supported by the stakeholders. This strategy involves reminding us of good work, friendship, and prestige in the past. The **"redress"** strategy tries to improve the reputation of the company by taking some responsibilities in the crisis. This strategy includes options for apologizing, offering compensation or giving gifts.

Creation of Research Questions

According to a study by Poppo and Schepker (2010: 138) "*stakeholder group is an important contextual factor that impacts response strategies*." Huang (2008: 297) found that "*in crisis managers' assessment, the form of crisis response (timely response, consistent response, and active response) is more powerful than crisis communicative strategies (denial, diversion, excuse, justification, and concession) in predicting trust and relational commitment*" as a result of a survey applied to 500 companies in Taiwan. Huang (2008: 321-322) proposed for future research that long-term research should be conducted to determine which crisis communication strategies will affect organizational public relations, how different crisis types will affect relational outcomes, and how organizational public perceptions and relational perceptions differ. Lyon and Cameron (2004: 232) found that both reputation and response style significantly affected attitude and behavioral intentions as a result of their research on their effect on crisis interventions. Kim (2011: 238), on the other hand, examined the results of "communication-based public relations," and suggests for future research that academics should explore the consequences of behavior-based public relations strategy.

Ki and Brown (2013: 415) found that crisis response strategies have no significant effects on the relational quality outcomes and that positive relationships with publics are more important than using crisis response strategies. Findings from the work of

Coombs and Holladay (2001: 335) reveal that relational satisfaction is an important factor in evaluating a crisis and organization. Brown and White (2011) found that there was a statistical difference between the pre-crisis and post-crisis measures of relational quality outcomes. Findings in these studies indicate that the current crisis will negatively affect the quality of the relationship and that target groups will not be affected by crisis communication strategies. Brown and White (2011) conclude that links between relationship perception and prior perceptions for different crisis situations need to be explored in future research. According to Park and Reber (2011), the sense of causality can be seen as a sign of crisis responsibility, and the level of crisis responsibility is related to the organization's accusative attribution.

Based on these explanations in the literature review and to compare with previous research results, the following research questions will be answered;

Research Question 1: Regardless of the crisis communication strategy, will there be a difference between the level of attribution scores of participants with different perceptions of organizational satisfaction and organizational reputation?

Research Question 2: Which crisis communication strategy will have the highest attribution scores and which one will have the lowest attribution scores in the participants who have a positive sense of relational satisfaction and corporate reputation towards the organization?

Research Question 3: Which crisis communication strategy will have the highest attribution scores and which one will have the lowest attribution scores in the participants who have a negative sense of relational satisfaction and corporate reputation towards the organization?

Research Question 4: How each of the four crisis communication strategies will impact on the post-crisis level of relational satisfaction and corporate reputation?

Research

In this research, an experimental method will be used, and the effect of corporate reputation and relational satisfaction level on crisis communication strategies will be tested. It can be said that it is possible to conduct experimental research in the field of public relations and crisis communication (Coombs, 1999: 125; Coombs and Schmidt, 2000:163; Boynton and Gougall, 2006:6; Coombs and Holladay, 2009:1). The method used in the research was formed by the blending of experimental methods used by authors such as Coombs and Holladay (1996), Callison (2004), Brown and White (2011), Park and Reber (2011), Sisco (2012), Ki and Brown (2013).

In this research, which will experimentally test the impact of corporate reputation and relational satisfaction on crisis response strategies, a public university in Turkey was selected as the organization, and its current students were selected as target groups.

To create the crisis situation, the University's building was said to be earthquake-

prone. So, the students were told that they would be sent to a campus area and a building outside the city center. This crisis to be created for earthquake risk is very realistic. Because, 35682 earthquakes occurred only in 2017 (https://deprem.afad.gov.tr/genelistatistikler) in Turkey. The average annual figure is equivalent to 98 earthquakes a day. Moreover, the city where the research was conducted was in an earthquake region where hundreds of people lost their lives in the recent earthquake, and thousands were injured. Tens of thousands of buildings were damaged. Most of these losses and damage were due to the engineering deficiencies of the buildings. It is a big crisis that can affect the layout and social life of the students who will change the school building where they attend the classes and go to a town about 50 kilometers away from the city center.

Students' perceptions of university reputation and their level of relational satisfaction with the university were conducted two months before the potential crisis situation was announced. A total of 137 students participated in the preliminary work, and 108 students participated in the study of the crisis situation. According to the sample population of students who participated in 8 groups, each group was between 10-15 persons. As a result of the survey, the surveys applied to 11 students were considered invalid according to the control options and the surveys applied to 97 people were evaluated. The age of the participants ranged from 19 to 40 years, and the average age was 23 years.

Relational satisfaction and corporate reputation perceptions were measured on a 5-point likert scale (1 strongly disagree, 5 strongly agree). Scores equal to the average (3.00 out of 5.00) or below the average were considered negative perceptive groups. The scores above the average (3.01) are considered positive perceptive groups.

Validity and Reliability of the Study

Each crisis scenario is designed with four different crisis communication strategies. The effectiveness of crisis response strategies has been tested on 50 participants in the pilot study, and it has been verified that the narrative description of crisis communication strategies is well designed for organization responsibility. In order to test the internal consistency of the items in the questionnaire, relational satisfaction and corporate reputation scale were applied to 50 participants in the pilot study. For corporate reputation scale, Fombrun et al. (2013) benefited from the corporate reputation scale developed for multi-stakeholder organizations. For the relational satisfaction scale, Hon and Grunig (1999) and, Bruning and Galloway (2003) developed a 24-item scale based on the relational satisfaction scale. It is widely accepted that these scales are used in research on "organization-public relationship". In the analysis using SPSS data techniques, Cronbach's Alpha score was measured as .922, which is a good level of the 13 item-scale based on relational satisfaction (e.g., X University acts in a responsible manner when dealing with students). The internal consistency of the 10-item corporate reputation scale (e.g., the quality of education of X University is good) was measured as .886, which is a good level for Cronbach's Alpha.

In the study, for the crisis response attribution scale, McAuley et al.'s scale was applied, which was used by Brown and White's (2011: 83) research. However, the authors stated that some of the items of this scale are low factor loads. Therefore, some of the

items on the scale have been changed according to the situation presented in the pilot study. "E.g. it's a mistake of the university administration that the school building is earthquake-prone" is used to refer to the responsibility of crisis. The participants' averages were statistically compared, and the result showed that there was no significant difference between them (Denial 4.28, reducing offensiveness 4.20, bolstering 4.10, redress 4.12), (1 - strongly disagree, 5- strongly agree). There was no statistically significant difference between the groups' mean with 95% confidence (F = 1,856, p> 0,05) . This means that the participants correctly understood the given crisis communication strategies and that this situation was understood by the participants as a negative situation which could cause very great stresses.

Findings

Within the scope of the research, firstly, students' perceptions of organization reputation and relational satisfaction towards the university were measured. The participants were divided into two groups as positive and negative organizational reputation and relational satisfaction. (*Scores equal to the average (3.00 out of 5.00) or below the average were considered negative perceptive groups. The scores above the average (3.01) are considered positive perceptive groups.)* Corporate reputation and relational satisfaction are considered as independent variables.

Corporate reputation and relational satisfaction survey were implemented two months before the students were informed about the potential crisis situation. The Cronbach's Alpha score of a 23-item (5 likert scales) based on relational satisfaction resulted in a good level of .894. The average score of the relational satisfaction scale applied to 97 participants is 3.24 out of 5.00. The Cronbach's Alpha value of a 10-item (5 Likert scales) based on the corporate reputation also resulted in a good level of .891. The average score of corporate reputation scale applied to 97 participants is 2.99 out of 5.00 with .61 standard deviation.

Anova test was performed to find the answer to the research question 1; firstly, the average of the groups (positive and negative) was examined. The attribution scores of the participants is shown in table 1 and table 2. High scores mean that organization is more accused of the crisis.

Table 1: Attribution scores of participants according to relational satisfaction

Group Statistics				
Relational Satisfaction	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**
Positive relational satisfaction	48	3,1979	,58872	,08497
Negative relational satisfaction	49	3,1020	,59808	,08544

Despite the fact that those who have positive relational satisfaction towards the organization have lower attribution scores than who have negative relational satisfaction, there is no significant difference between them according to SPSS analysis "T (95) = .796, p <.940".

Table 2: Attribution scores of participants according to corporate reputation perception

Group Statistics

Corporate reputation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Positive corporate reputation	50	3,0560	,61815	,08742
Negative corporate reputation	47	3,2489	,55281	,08064

Despite the fact that those who have a positive corporate reputation for the organization have lower attribution scores than who have a negative corporate reputation, there is no significant difference between groups "T (95) = 1.617, p <.353".

It is understandable that why the people with negative opinions towards the organization accused more to organization in crisis situations. According to the research result, participants who have negative thoughts about both relational satisfaction and corporate reputation accused the organization more. Nevertheless, the difference between the participants with positive and negative attitudes towards the organization was not significant. Organizations should, therefore, consider that target group relationships can change, especially during the crisis, and strive to manage crisis and reduce damages that do not rely on organizational backgrounds.

In order to search for the answer to the research question 2, Anova test was first performed, and the descriptive statistics were considered and compared to the group averages. The attribution scores of the participants who have the positive relational satisfaction and applied four different crisis communication strategies are shown in table 3. High scores mean that organization is more accused of the crisis.

Table 3: Attribution scores of participants according to positive relational satisfaction

Crisis Response Strategy	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Denial	3,3909	11	,62523
Reducing offensiveness	2,9267	15	,55093
Bolstering	3,2818	11	,50758
Redress	2,7182	11	,61938
Total	3,0667	48	,61656

According to table 3, within the four different crisis communication strategies, the most attribution score among the participants within the positive relational satisfaction perception was "denial." This group's attribution score is 3.39 with .63 standard deviation. The fourth group, which is the "redress" strategy was applied, gave the lowest attribution score. The average score of this group is 2.72 with .62 standard deviation. A significant difference was found between the "denial" strategy and "redress" strategy groups. (F=3,317, 0,28 < 0,05)

The attribution scores of the participants who have positive corporate reputation perception and were applied four different crisis communication strategies are shown in table 4.

Table 4: Attribution scores of participants according to positive corporate reputation

Crisis Response Strategy	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Denial	3,2917	12	,48516
Reducing offensiveness	3,2929	14	,60443
Bolstering	2,9545	11	,46339
Redress	2,8846	13	,71513
Total	3,1120	50	,59612

According to table 4, among the participants who have positive reputation perception, the "reducing offensiveness" strategy gave the highest attribution score even though the difference was very small. The attribution score of this group was found similar with the group which the "denial" strategy was applied. The fourth group is, which is the "redress" strategy was applied, gave the lowest attribution score. The difference between the groups with the highest and lowest attribution score was found significant. (F=4,525, 0,39 < 0,05)

In order to search for the answer to the research question 3, descriptive statistics were first considered, and the groups' averages were examined. The attribution score of the participants who have the negative relational satisfaction are shown in table 5. High scores mean that organization is more accused of the crisis.

Table 5: Attribution scores of participants with negative relational satisfaction

Crisis Response Strategy	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Denial	3,3500	12	,53343
Reducing offensiveness	3,3000	13	,64550
Bolstering	3,2500	10	,57975
Redress	2,9357	14	,53581
Total	3,1980	49	,58256

It can be inferred from table 5 that from the four different crisis communication strategies, the "denial" strategy gave the highest attribution score in the groups who have a negative relational satisfaction perception. This group has 3.35 attribution score with .53 standard deviation. The fourth group is, which is the "redress" strategy was applied, gave the lowest attribution score. The average score of this group is 2.94 with .54 standard deviation. The difference was found significant between the "denial" strategy and "redress" strategy groups. (F=3,317, 0,28 < 0,05)

The attribution score of participants who have negative corporate reputation perceptions is shown in table 6.

Table 6: Attribution score of participants with negative corporate reputation perception

Crisis Response Strategy	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Denial	3,3636	11	,56617
Reducing offensiveness	3,2083	12	,73418
Bolstering	3,2667	12	,52972
Redress	2,9750	12	,53108
Total	3,2000	47	,59491

According to table 6, among the participants who have negative corporate reputation perception, "denial" strategy gave the highest attribution score. The fourth group is, which is the "redress" strategy was applied, gave the lowest attribution score. The difference between groups was found significant. (F=1,992 0,27 < 0,05)

A comparative t-test (a paired sample t-test) was used to test whether the previous and post measures of satisfaction and corporate reputation attitudes were statistically significant. Acording to the results, the post measurements were significantly lower than the previous measurements. The difference between previous (M=3.24, SD=.68) and post (M=2.55 SD=.70) relational satisfaction averages was found significant "T (96) = -6.951, p> .000". The difference between previous (M=3.15, SD=.59) and post (M=2.92, SD=.65) corporate reputation perceptions was found significant too "T (96) = 2,688, p> .008".

However, for the purpose of research, making such a general assessment can be misleading since it's needs to be measured how each crisis response strategy changed the relational satisfaction and corporate reputation. For this, the averages of previous and post perceptions were measured in each group. The results are shown in table 7 and table 8.

Table 7: Comparison of previous and post relational satisfaction measures by groups

		PRE-Relational Satisfaction	**POST-Relational Satisfaction**
Denial	Mean	3,2552	2,3083
	N	23	23
	Std. Deviation	,75492	,64072
Reducing offensiveness	Mean	3,3261	2,6190
	N	28	28
	Std. Deviation	,66609	,66966
Bolstering	Mean	3,2981	2,6147
	N	21	21
	Std. Deviation	,57026	,72158
Redress	Mean	3,0661	2,6485
	N	25	25
	Std. Deviation	,71642	,77124
Total	Mean	3,2362	2,5520
	N	97	97
	Std. Deviation	,67990	,70442

According to the results in table 7, it's seen that each crisis communication strategy reduced the relational satisfaction at certain rate. The strategy that most reduced the relational satisfaction is the "denial" strategy. The second is "reducing offensiveness," the third is "bolstering," and the fourth is "redress" strategy.

Table 8: Comparison of previous and post corporate reputation measures

		POST- Corporate Reputation	PRE-Corporate Reputation
Denial	Mean	2,3957	2,9087
	N	23	23
	Std. Deviation	,51122	,60597
Reducing offensiveness	Mean	2,3885	2,9808
	N	26	26
	Std. Deviation	,37982	,61580
Bolstering	Mean	2,5826	2,9478
	N	23	23
	Std. Deviation	,51668	,46794
Redress	Mean	2,9560	2,9960
	N	25	25
	Std. Deviation	,52605	,72771
Total	Mean	2,5825	2,9598
	N	97	97
	Std. Deviation	,53171	,60547

According to the results in table 8, it's seen that the perceptions of the post corporate reputation have fallen at certain rates within each group. The strategy that most reduced the corporate reputation is the "reducing offensiveness" strategy. The second is "denial," the third is "bolstering," and the fourth is "redress." There was no significant difference between the previous and post measurement in the group which is the "redress strategy" was applied.

Conclusion and Recommendations

One of the most important results of this research is that organizations should make efforts to minimize the negative effects of the crisis in order to strengthen relations with target groups. Otherwise, crisis communication strategies may be ineffective.

According to the results, within the crisis communication strategies, the result of using the "redress" strategy is more effective than using other strategies. The use of the "denial" strategy and the avoidance of responsibility in the crisis have all attracted attention as the most unsuccessful strategy among all the strategies and groups. The acceptance of the responsibility of the establishment in crisis can be regarded as a more honest behavior and can earn the appreciation of target groups. Denying can trigger negative feelings and anger. Such strategies that accept responsibility will strengthen the target groups in the crisis and supportive behavior of the public.

One of the important findings of this study is that none of the other crisis communication strategies reduced the accusation of the target group except the "redress (apology and compensation)" strategy. This study is consistent with previous studies (Brown and White, 2011; Ki and Brown, 2013) about the impact of crisis response strategies on the perception of the organization about the responsibility of crisis. It is

useful to note that the "apology and compensation" strategy used in this study is indeed to reduce the damages that the crisis may cause. Otherwise, perhaps this strategy could be ineffective like other strategies. Moreover, if the promises are not fulfilled, perhaps organizations will be more negatively affected. Coombs and Holladay (2012: 280) have demonstrated that apology and positive intentions are an effective way to manage crisis, as demonstrated in the SCCT in their study. This is because Coombs (1999, 2007, 2015) is the only strategy that takes responsibility for the relationship between the organization and its target groups. The other three strategies each focused on communication to reduce the responsibility of the organization in crisis or to increase its reputation in the crisis in an effort to lift the link between the organization and the crisis (Brown and White, 2011: 88). Within the four different strategies, the highest risk of the crisis was attributed to the "denial" strategy. Similarly, Mattila (2009: 211) found that apology can reduce negative effects and that denying is ineffective. This shows that the denial strategy should be used to complement other intervention strategies and that it does not have a value by itself.

Another important finding is that maintaining good relationships with target groups is more important than choosing a specific crisis strategy. Therefore, the best crisis strategy is to maintain good relations. These findings are consistent with previous findings (Brown and White, 2011: 90). For this credibility, the establishment must have a positive organization background. Managing crisis successfully does not only save the reputation of organizations and relational satisfaction but also raises the existing reputations and relational satisfaction of both public relations departments and organization.

The distinction of the target group is one of the most important steps in preparation for crisis communication. Stephens et al. (2005: 390) suggest that different crisis message strategies should be used in communication with different stakeholder groups. The target masses are not a homogeneous group. They can be divided into very different groups within themselves. There can be very different tasks, corporate identity definitions, functions, relationship qualities, and interests because different target groups may have different expectations during times of crisis. Comments and behaviors may vary. Genders, ages, economic statuses, educational levels, personality traits, and lifestyles of the people who constitute the target groups are different. These people can have very different psychological structures. Moreover, Holtzhausen and Roberts (2009: 165) have suggested in their work that a complex approach to dealing with crisis may be better.

Although significant findings were obtained in this study, the impact of crisis response strategies was only tested empirically. Future research should confirm the findings with different target groups or different crisis situations and strengthen the information about the crisis communication in terms of practices and researches.

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