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The impact of top management support for strategic planning on crisis management: Case study on UNRWA-Gaza strip

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Abstract

The study aims to analyze the impact of top management support for strategic planning on crisis management in UNRWA-Gaza Strip field in Palestine. Several descriptive analytical methods were used for this purpose, and a survey as a tool for data collection. Community size was (881), and the study sample was stratified random (268).

The overall findings of the current study show that top management provides needed HR for strategic planning but with no financial support. Also there are shortcomings in the way that organization manages the crises before and after they occur. A crisis management is only practicing during the crisis. The study suggest that top management must provide the financial support for strategic planning, periodic meetings to prepare how to deal with potential crisis in the future, establishing a specialized team and provide them with all sources needed.

Keywords: Top Management, Strategic Planning, Crisis Management, UNRWA, Gaza Strip

1. Introduction

Contemporary organizations live in complex political, social, economic, technological, and cultural changes. Opportunities and threats are changing on an ongoing basis, not just the external environment of the organization, but also their interior environment. This change put the organization in a tough mission that require a fast adoption and cope with the external and internal environment to ensure survival and achieve their goals, otherwise it will be doomed to finish and disappearing.

Under these rapid changes in the organization environment, the need for a strategic planning process increased. The analyzing process for the internal and external environment in light of the vision, mission and clear objectives of the organization is essential. Strategic and operational plans for the organization are important to success and survival.

Crisis has also become a key feature also of contemporary organizations under this dynamic environment, and these crises threaten the continuity of the organization, survival and the ability to continue providing their services. Also crisis put organizations reputation and image in the community at stake, if those organizations not able to deal with crises through the effective management of the different stages of the crisis either before, during or after the fact.

NGOs are no different from the rest of the business organizations according to that, the objective of this study is to examine the impact of UNRWA top management support for strategic planning on crisis management.

The study raises the question of

1. How far the top management supports strategic planning in UNRWA?
2. To which extent crisis management practicing in the UNRWA (before, during, after)?

2. Literature review

Palestinian environment is unstable and unsecure with all means. Also suffer from the ongoing blockade and a lot of crisis. Despite the fact that the international relief agency "UNRWA" in Gaza practiced strategic planning, there are shortcomings in dealing with crises.

For example, microfinance program for SMEs has been reduced by 15% in 2012, teaching level is collapsing in dramatic way cause of extra student's number with shortage in facilities. Unemployed percent were 60% for youth in 2014 which represent the highest in the world.

Crisis management in such environment is so difficult and quite good strategic plan it will be wasting of sources not any more.

2.1 Strategic planning

Goldman & Casey (2010) defined strategic planning: "Oriented systematic based on the router untapped opportunities, which lead to discover new organizational strategies".

The important of strategic planning comes from it is ability to lead the organization in the future and decreases the failed opportunity (Poister, 2010; Al-Waleed, 2010) [28, 14]. The concept of strategic planning might differ between organizations according to future concept and means to deal with the future (Suklev & Debarliev; 2012, Bin Sdira, 2013) [16].

The main frame of strategic planning is strategic management. Wheelen & Hunger (2012) & David (2011) pointed that strategic management are a series of administrative decisions and actions that determine the long-term performance of the organization, which

includes the following four stages: environmental scanning, strategy formulation, application and implementation of the strategy, evaluation, monitoring and control.

According to them, strategic planning is the main function for strategic management.

Sharbiny (2009) and Elzamly (2015) [19] mentioned the difference between strategic planning and strategic management as the following:

1. Strategic planning is an analytical process, while the strategic management is also concern about performance.
2. Strategic planning end when pick the things that will be made, while the strategic management skip the process of identifying options for the orientation of the organization to search for appropriate choices by people who can implement the decisions.
3. The strategic planning outcomes lead to better strategic decisions, while strategic management outcomes represented in strategically results.

2.2 Top management support

The success of strategic planning depends on top management support. Many authors debate this point. Top management plays pivotal role as a leader (Abu Naser *et al*., 2010, Naser et. al. 2016). Leadership is an important subject for almost many years in many fields. Leadership has been plays a crucial part in organization in achieving its goal through a strategic planning towards increasing organizational performance (Rashid *et al*., 2016, Slavik *et al*., 2016) [29].

The good leader must identify the direction to achieve organizational goal. Karsten *et al*. (2009) [21] mentioned that different style of leadership is use as a medium for planning. It also provides the notion that leader's personal matter could affect the strategic planning if they not manage their self well. In addition, charismatic and transformational character in leadership is to be said that it has significant relationship effectiveness (Amirul & Daud, 2012) [15].

Therefore, individual as leader is exactly significant towards strategic planning. Besides, leadership in change flexibility has reflects it pivotal role in strategic planning.

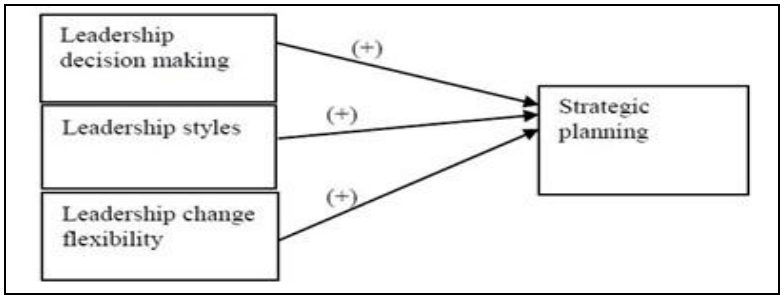

Fig 1: Leadership Elements and Strategic Planning

Top management refers to senior-level leaders including presidents, owners, and other high ranking executives (CEO, CFO, COO etc.) and senior-level managers. Several researchers have emphasized the effect of top management on strategy implementation. Most of them point out the important figurehead role of top management in the process of strategy planning (Musse, 2013, Al-Sabah, 2013) [12].

Effectiveness of strategy planning and implementation is, at least in part, affected by the quality of people involved in the process. Here, quality refers to skills, attitudes, capabilities, experiences and other characteristics of people required by a specific task or position (Al-Khateeb, 2015; Ridwan, 2015; Dandira, 2011) [10, 30, 18].

Viseras, Baines, and Sweeney (2005) group (36) key success factors into three research categories: people, organization, systems. Their intriguing findings indicate that strategy planning success depends crucially on the human or people side of project management, and less on organization and systems related factors.

Leadership style is also important factor in top management support. Leadership style that folds knowledge management into the strategy achieves advantage and productivity. Abu Naser *et al*. (2016) discussed the importance of knowledge management leadership style as a main factor in high performance and productivity.

2.3 Crisis management

Crisis management involves quick decision-making in critical conditions, with the obligation of issuing a public report to the media. Crises therefore lead

Decision-makers into an urgent decision-making situation, with the obligation to minimize the potential consequences for a wide range of high-stake elements

There are many definitions for crisis management (Chollet *et al*., 2016) [17]. Jad Al-Rab (2010), Yamamoto & Sekeroglu (2011) [34], & Panos (2013) [27] define it as "Systematic attempt to define and identify potential crises, take action and measures to prevent and contain the impact and get rid of the effects".

Crisis management in the organization process passed through several stages represents each stage of them to deal with the crisis basis, although each of these phases is characterized by a kind of autonomy in dealing with them depending on the nature of each of its stages. The main goal remains to find a solution to the crisis and come out from it with minimal losses.

Sense of crisis and ignoring it is the first phase of the crisis because it is fast-moving, and vice versa, recognition, handling and treatment is the first stage of facing, treatment and reducing the negative effects.

Yarmohammadian *et al*. (2016) [35], Abu Moamer (2011) [2], Al-Saeed (2011) [13] & Jad Al-Rab (2010) classified crisis into three stages:

1. Pre- crisis: prevent the crisis and prepare for it.
2. Response: deal and respond to the crisis.
3. Post-crisis: improve preparedness for future crises and record the flow of information which happened during the crisis and take advantage of any future crisis.

Appropriate response toward the unexpected events requires providing facilities and suitable plans. Different societies always look for managing the damages of the unexpected events. Therefore, the organization's manager always needs to be prepared to encounter the crisis and think to decrease the effects of crises on the organization (Yarmohammadian *et al*., 2016) [35].

As the main aim of the crisis management plan is to provide the most appropriate services to most of injured people, it is necessary to develop a specified plan with scientific and precise management at all stages before, in progress and after crisis by taking precautionary actions, establishing the crisis management committee, education familiarizing the staffs, and doing the periodical maneuver to get prepared and facing the crisis, giving an appropriate response while the crisis occurs and taking actions for rebuilding after the crisis occurs. These actions should be on the basis of the activities, strategies, and the crisis plans at the national level (Naghibosadat, 2008) [24].

2.4 Strategic planning and Crisis management

The recent events throughout the world have brought about an increase in paying attention to strategic planning and getting ready against crises. Although major human's progresses have increased his power to counter crises and to respond to the unexpected events, he has not totally been able to have control over them yet.

Explore the future vision for crises are the essence of strategic planning to deal and monitor the stages and steps for it is development. Reliance on accurate prediction that expansion scope and help to prepare the appropriate scenarios, processing of human, technical, physical and administrative resources to cope with future crises and reduce their impact in the shortest time and at the lowest cost and effort (Al-Waleed, 2010) [14].

Strategic planning oriented to face crisis require full support and assistance from top management, well-defined communications plan, gather information as input to strategic detect signs of the crisis and the beginning and the extent of its development through integration between quantitative methods and how to plan for crisis management by choosing appropriate strategies (Abo Halima, 2013; Bin Sdira, 2013; Abu Moamer, 2011; Al Shobaki & Abu Naser, 2016)) [1, 16, 2,].

For designing any strategic plan to address the crisis we must take into account the following variables (Yarmohammadian *et al*., 2016; Chollet *et al*., 2016; Jad Al-Rab, 2010; Al-Shaalan, 2002) [35, 17] :

1. Objective: Be prepared to face the crisis.
2. Definitions and abbreviations: Risk, exposure, elements exposed to hazard.
3. Country specifications: Terrain, climate, statistics, population distribution, industry, energy sources and regime.
4. Threat description: Historical background, types of crises and its origin.
5. Leadership and coordination: The authorities, powers and responsibilities for crisis management.
6. Planning team and different sectors in the organization.
7. Foreign aids: Grants power and authorities to request foreign aid to the affected sites.
8. Identify emergency centers: Set site emergency centers and secure transport and communication among them.
9. Notification and warning: Determine the receipt of broadcast news and alerts and create a data base system.
10. Support associations: Ministries and institutions such as health, police, medical centers and specialized medical devices.
11. Sub-plans: Find a complementary basic service plans such as rescue and relief, ambulance, nursing, police, transportation, electric power, etc. ….

Adding to previous variables mentioned above and cause of each country have it is own specifications, other domestic factors should be included in the strategic plan for facing crisis (Tidwell, 2016; Maiorescu, 2016) [32, 22]:

1. Geographical factor: Total area of the country, areas that can be supported as soon as possible, the border with the neighboring countries and the possibility of cooperation with them in the attribution urgency of the border area, if possible, depending on the political situation between these countries.
2. Demographic factor: Identify the population of the areas, distribution of manpower, population distribution and density.
3. Work activities in structures and the nature of manpower activities.
4. Important economic and financial resources in the country.

According to literature review, following is the main hypothesis for the study:

H1: There is a statistically significant effect for top management support on crisis management (before, during, after) in UNRWA- Gaza Strip.
And that lead us to the next sub-hypotheses:

H1-1: There is a statistically significant effect for top management support on crisis management before crisis in UNRWA- Gaza Strip.

H1-2: There is a statistically significant effect for top management support on crisis management during crisis in UNRWA- Gaza Strip.

H1-3: There is a statistically significant effect for top management support on crisis management after crisis in UNRWA- Gaza Strip.

3. Research design

3.1 Study population and sampling

This study conducted at UNRWA- Gaza Strip Field–Palestine. UNRWA is the biggest supporter for Palestinian refugee all over the world in almost all fields. In Gaza Strip live about (1.50 M) refugee (for more information, http://www.unrwa.org). The UNRWA manager's population in Gaza Strip Filed is (881), stratified random sample was (268) and the usable sample was (235).

3.2 Research instrument

The first dimension instrument is about top management support and contain (8) statements. The second dimension of the instrument which measure crisis management contains three sub-fields depending on other research literatures. Those statements were further revised and modified by experts in a subsequent stage before drafting the final version of the questionnaire.

Table 1: Research Instrument

Dimension 1: Top Management Support	No. of statements	Dimension 2: Crisis Management	No. of statements
	8	Before Crisis	6
		During Crisis	6
		After Crisis	6

A five-point Lekert scale of agreement was used for measurement, running from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree", with a Neutral category for scale midpoint.

3.3 Validity and reliability assessment

The study adopted Cronbach's α to measure the internal consistence reliability of the questionnaire. The results showed that Cronbach's α values for all dimensions were > (0.5). It indicated that the design of the questionnaire had a high internal consistency.

3.4 Statistical procedures

Several statistical tools were used for data analysis and hypotheses testing, including reliability Correlation using Cronbach's alpha, "ANOVA", Pearson Correlation Coefficient, and Scheffe.

4. Data analysis and discussion of results

T-test was used to examine the dimensions and hypotheses. The results of the analysis are shown in table 2.

Table 2: T test for dimensions

sig	t	SD	MAR	MA	Dimension	Index
					FD	
0.000	15.05	0.592	71.62	3.58	Top Management	1
					SD	
0.000	8.69	0.694	66.30	3.31	Before Crisis	2
0.000	17.28	0.581	73.11	3.66	During Crisis	3
0.000	7.49	0.557	68.34	3.42	After Crisis	4
0.000	15.08	0.491	69.66	3.48	TR for SD	

For the first dimension (top management support), the sample agree with the existence of the support as the mean average was (71.62%).

The second dimension (crisis management) has three sub-dimensions. The mean average for first sub-dimension (before crisis) was (66.30%) and for the third sub-dimension. Those results infer a shortage in crisis management for the period before and after crisis happened.

Second sub-dimension (during crisis) was (73.11%), this mean that the UNRWA treat well with crisis only when it happened.

The hypotheses test shows that there is a weak static relation between top management support and crisis management with Pearson Correlation Coefficient (0.431). This finding is shown in table 3.

Table 3: Hypotheses Test

Crisis Management	correlation	Crisis			Top Management Support
		after	during	Before	
0.431	Pearson	0.377	0.406	0.458	

The weak relation comes from the lack in strategic planning before and after the crisis. The authors refer that to the sequential crises passed out generally in the Middle East and in Palestine in particular.

5. Conclusion

UNRWA is a multi-service organization. It is role in the world is very operative, not just in Palestine, but it also serves millions of Palestinians refugees all around the world (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan). UNRWA human development and humanitarian services encompass primary and vocational education, primary health care, relief and social services, infrastructure and camp improvement, microfinance and emergency response, including in situations of armed conflict. With such responsibilities which been adopted since 1949, and with more than (5.3 M) refugee all over the world, and with a huge lack in finance and resources, crisis might form a real humanity disaster in the area.

Strategic planning in UNRWA as a Framework for crisis management must be reinforcement by resources and team work.

Such organization cannot stop services cause of crises, to that one of it is basic priorities is to design a solid system to manage crisis before, during and after it happened.

The current study shows some weak in crisis prediction, which might be normal thing in ordinary organizations, but for UNRWA this issue must be solved so fast.

Strategic planning is not the only solution for crisis management, but it is the most reliable and effective system that suits such huge organizations.

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