

Strategies Employed to Face Potential Crisis Resulting from School Extreme Accidents in light of "the Situational Crisis Communication Theory" : A Case Study

Abstract

The study aimed to improve the understanding of the strategies which the school administrations used to handle the crises when and after they occurred, based on Coombs's the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT).

The study attempted to answer the main question: What are the response strategies for the potential crisis resulting from school extreme accidents in light of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)?

The study population consisted of six members of the old and new administrative faculty and five teachers of the Jerusalem Noor Al-Huda School and Kindergarten, as well as four parents. The data were collected from semi – structured interviews with the above sample of participants, accident-related official documents and media reports, the Palestinian Ministerial Mission fact-finding report on Jaba accident, and various media reports.

To achieve the objectives of the study, a semi-structured interview was prepared to identify the response strategies which were employed in the crisis of Jaba accident. The interview was assessed by a team of arbitrators to verify its reliability. The external consistency of reported data was computed, and the percent of agreement was 0.86.

The results of the study showed that the Jerusalem Noor Huda School used a scapegoating strategy in dealing with the crisis of Jaba accident by accusing the lorry driver as the main cause of the accident in the first place. In addition, the study showed that there was a discrepancy in the assessment of the strategic success; the school administration and its faculty regarded it successful, whereas the parents thought that it was ineffective. However, the school administration thought they

succeeded in choosing the proper strategies because the school's reputation was not passively affected after the accident.

In light of its findings, the study ended up with some concrete operational recommendations to the policy makers. A crisis-management team should be established in all Palestinian schools to develop up-to-date plans for potential crises and conduct crisis exercises and drills; a spokesperson should be appointed in each school for issuing media statements after approval of the legal advisor; modern means of communication should be made available to establish effective means of communication with competent parties such as by email or text messages.