TURKEY'S CRISIS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY IN THE PROCESS OF COVID-19

COVİD-19 SÜRECİNDE TÜRKİYE’NİN KRİZ YÖNETİM STRATEJİSİ


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Öz


Anahtar Kelimeler: Covid-19, Salgın, Kriz Yönetimi, Stratejik Yönetim, Türkiye

Abstract

After the coronavirus turned into an epidemic worldwide, all countries, from the strongest to the weakest economically, have taken various measures. The aim of this study is to determine the effects of the coronavirus crisis in Turkey; to mention the strategies implemented to minimize the impact of the crisis and to evaluate the steps taken within the framework of crisis management. Content analysis, which is one of the qualitative research methods, has been used as the method of the research. In the research, the sources of international / national official institutions and non-governmental organizations were examined. As a result, it has been determined that Turkey has followed a successful and effective crisis management strategy having considered Turkey’s crisis prevention (delaying the entry into the country), being prepared for the crisis (a strong health care system and having appointed staff), to respond the crisis (transparent, accountable, assumed responsibility and to have effective communication) and in the processes of returning from the crisis to new normal life.

Keywords: Covid-19, Pandemic, Crises Management, Strategic Management, Turkey

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Background:

After the covid-19 disease spread around the world and turned into a kind of pandemic, its sociocultural, economic and political effects are seen. Crisis management is a process consisting of four stages. These; evaluating possible pre-crisis warning signals and establishing preparedness and prevention systems; the process of trying to take under control during the crisis and by minimizing its effects returning to the equilibrium state, providing the necessary learning by making post-crisis evaluation.

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Research Purpose:
The aim of this study is to determine the effects of the coronavirus crisis in Turkey; to mention the strategies implemented to minimize the impact of the crisis and to evaluate the steps taken within the framework of crisis management.

Methodology:
In this research, a qualitative research method, which deals with meanings, not numbers, is used to reveal what is happening in a new situation. Documents, letters, magazines, books, official newspapers, bulletin boards and many other official and unofficial written sources (Hays & Wood, 2011) were examined.

Findings:
Comparing the status of cases and the death occurred due to the corona in Turkey with other countries, it will be able to shed light on policy-making. The average Covid-19 cumulative death-case ratio of 140 countries whose data is reported in the ECDC (European Center for Disease Control) dataset is 4.78 as of April 12, 2020 (ECDC 2020). Turkey's cumulative-cumulative death rate was 2.11 cases of April 12 2020. This rate is about half of the average of countries with a population of over 75 million (4.29). This is Turkey’s treatment and management of cases can mean that relatively successful.

Conclusions:
Turkey has pursued a precaution strategy in the process of crisis management. It is observed that implementing a policy that observes the principles of risk management and crisis management in the process of Turkey's fight against the pandemic. Informed public, efforts to prevent the spread, quarantine measures, participation in decision-making processes through the recommendations of the Scientific Committee, making statements based on evidence and data, and assuming responsibility for the areas of duty of institutions are proofs that crisis management is effectively implemented.

1. INTRODUCTION

The developments in the process of the covid-19 pandemic, that emerged in Wuhan / China in the last days of 2019 and shook the whole world, was declared a pandemic by World Health Organization. After March 11, 2020 It was seen as risk and crisis in the eyes of the society and government agencies. After the covid-19 disease spread around the world and turned into a kind of pandemic, its sociocultural, economic and political effects are seen.

With travel restrictions, curfews, unpaid leaving work applications and working hour regulations, the decrease in household income, the psychological effects of the epidemic and the restrictions in supply naturally created sectoral demand changes, and thus the epidemic has gained a dimension that affects both production and demand for production. These contractions in demand and supply can cause the most serious economic crisis after the Great Depression (Kilpatrick, 2020).

The developments that are not known unpredictable and difficult to prevent, which is determined by the state at macro or micro level, a change process that produces results that can affect individuals and businesses which requires urgent intervention for a solution and can sometimes cause fear and panic is called a crisis. The financial problems caused by the pandemic, redundancy, decrease in demand, production difficulties and uncertainty had more or less negative effects in almost every economy in the world, and Covid-19 crisis process started. Crisis management is a process consisting of four stages. These; evaluating possible pre-crisis warning signals and establishing preparedness and prevention systems; the process of trying to take under control during the crisis and by minimizing its effects returning to the equilibrium state, providing the necessary learning by making post-crisis evaluation.

In this study Turkey's struggle with Covid-19 was evaluated in the framework of strategic management based on risk management and crisis management.
2. METHOD

In this research, a qualitative research method, which deals with meanings, not numbers, is used to reveal what is happening in a new situation. Documents, letters, magazines, books, official newspapers, bulletin boards and many other official and unofficial written sources (Hays & Wood, 2011) were examined. Qualitative work serves to establish contexts in which a thoughtful awareness of current media practices may develop (Jankowski and Jensen, 2002). Content analysis is a research method used to analyze social artifacts such as television shows, newspaper articles, or web sites, among others (Boyle and Schmierbach, 2019).

The limitation of the study is that the process of combating pandemic continues during the days when the study was prepared. Therefore, the data was obtained from institutions’ website such as World Bank, World Health Organization, Turkey presidency, Ministry of Health.

3. RESULTS

COVID-19 transmission is declining in China since late March 2020; in case of Singapore, France, Italy, Germany and Spain it is stagnating; Canada, Turkey, South Africa and Iran have slow rise in the daily number of cases; and in UK, Mexico, Russia, USA and Brazil, the cases are escalating at a rapid pace as of 29 May 2020. As more new cases arrive in these locations, it becomes very necessary for the authorities to adopt certain control measures to stop the chains of transmission, failing to establish such measures might lead to new outbreaks and the virus may never go from the lives of common masses (Salgotra et al., 2020).

After the coronavirus turned into an epidemic worldwide, all countries, from the strongest to the weakest economically, have taken various measures. Turkey, before the disease entered the country, took several measures in January and February. According to official announcements and media reports, these measures can be ordered as, the establishment of a Scientific Committee, the control of passengers with thermal cameras who were coming from abroad, especially from China and the Far East, the complete suspension of Chinese flights, the closure of the Iranian border, the suspension of flights to Italy, Iraq and South Korea. The measures taken by Turkey, could delay the entry of the disease to March 11th 2020 which was the date later than the European countries and her neighbouring country Iran. Therefore, Turkey can be evaluated as successful to follow the strategies to prevent the disease as the first stage of managing the crisis by sensing the risk.

After finding the first case in Turkey the primary schools, secondary schools and universities in the whole country were paused the education and adding these precautions all the places which can include crowds like shopping centres, stores and other corporations were closed temporarily on 03.13.2020. For example, with the statement made by the Directorate of Religious Affairs, it was decided not to perform Friday prayers in mosques. In this context, citizens from all mosques in Turkey "stay home" call was made. In the announcement made after the prayers of time, "Dear citizens, our fight against the corona virus continues. Let the spring coming and the weather get warmer do not mislead us. The danger of the pandemic is not past. Let's continue to stay in homes and follow the precautions together" expressions were used. These warnings from mosques can be considered as one of the efforts to contain the crisis.

According to the decision taken by the Ministry of Interior, from 14 March 2020 08.00 o’clock to 17 April 2020 the citizens living in Germany, Austria, Netherlands, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, France were restricted to get in Turkey.

According to the circular on "Covid-19 Measures" sent to 81 provincial governorships on March 16, 2020, some restrictions and quarantine were imposed. With the circulars titled as "Coronavirus Measures" contribution was made to economic and social life measures. For example, with the effect of these circulars, 149382 workplaces across the country have temporarily suspended their activities between 15-18 March 2020. With these circulars, all entertainment venues,
swimming pools, Turkish baths, saunas, spas, massage parlors, SPA and sports center activities were temporarily suspended. The activities of barbers and beauty centers were stopped, and all restaurants, etc. workplaces were enabled to serve only with package service without allowing customers to sit down. Exceptions are made for bread production, health care products outlets, public and private health institutions and pharmacies, and public institutions that produce compulsory service and for the representatives of the Turkish National Assembly (TNA).

In Turkey, "stay home for health" calls made, citizens were encouraged to stay at home. A quarantine rule has been introduced especially for the citizens over the age of 65 who are in the risk group and citizens aged 0-20, considering that they may be carriers. With the increase in the number of cases, weekends and some holidays were combined, and a general curfew was imposed for all citizens in 30 major cities and Zonguldak. During the pandemic period, many companies started the method working from home. On the other hand, businesses that are unable to implement the home working system have temporarily suspended their activities. Within the scope of the measures, intercity transportation and traveller activities were stopped. These steps can be considered as efforts to control the crisis and prevent the pandemy.

The pandemy affected the service sector most. Many countries stopped their service sector activities indefinitely. People started working at home or not going to work thoroughly. During the epidemic period the discretionary expenditures of the consumers ended, people moved away from public transportation and avoided public places such as restaurants, shopping malls and museums. Therefore, all sectors are negatively affected by this situation. According to the reports published by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2019 and 2020, the total number of visitors to our country in the first quarter of 2019 was 6.8 million. However, as a result of the negative effects of the coronavirus, the number of visitors to the country in the first quarter of 2020 decreased by 20.5% compared to 2019, and decreased to 5.5 million. The number of international tourists decreased by 22% in the first quarter of 2020, worldwide 57% of this reduction is stated to be 68% in Turkey. By the end of the year, the number of international tourists may decrease by 60% to 80% (UNWTO, 2020).

Capacity Utilization Rate (CUR) in the production sector was 61.6% in April. (TCMB 2020). According to the Turkey Statistical Institute data, the monthly industrial production fell 30.4% and 31.4% per annum (TUIK, 2020). In the sub-sectors of the industry there was a decrease of 14.5% in mining and quarrying, 33.3% in the manufacturing industry, and 14.9% in the production and distribution of electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning. Turkey 2020 growth forecast was reduced to 0.5% in The World Bank (WB) report. She foresees 4% of Turkey's economy will grow in 2021 (THE WORLD BANK, 2020).

Crises can be distinguished as conventional, unexpected, intractable and fundamental according to predictability and the possibility to influence a crisis (Gundel 2005). Rasmussen adopted systemic approaches to build a crisis management system of socio-technical which is divided into three levels from top to bottom, namely: Government, Regulators and Associations and Company (Rasmussen, 1997). Before the Corona crisis, transition to the Presidential Government system, decision mechanisms were accelerated. The fact that the ministers came from within the sector revealed the importance of competence in many ministries.

During times of crisis, two-way communication is essential. The importance of leaders listening and being aware, while also effectively disseminating information was emphasized (Haddon et al., 2015) Perhaps the competency most closely identified with crisis management is the ability to communicate effectively. Very often, the type of communication observed during a crisis event is one that is rooted in the public relations tradition and attempts to position the firm or the problem in relatively favorable terms. In other words, crisis communication is used to positively shape the stakeholders’ perceptions of the crisis (Wooten and James, 2008).
During the crisis, communication management was carried out transparently by both the Ministry of Health and the Directorate of Communication and regularly informed its followers and the public through social media. For example, on March 10, the total number of deaths worldwide was 4 thousand, the number of cases in Italy exceeded 10 thousand and the number of deaths rose to 631, on that date, the number of cases and deaths increased gradually in almost all countries of Europe and the virus was spread over the countries. In such a period, at 00:30 at night, connecting March 10 to March 11, Health Minister Fahrettin Koca announced at a press conference that a person was positive for the Covid-19 test and was quarantined with his relatives (TRMH, 2020). With the disclosure of the case, it is seen that an extremely transparent process has been carried out from the first day. Relevant data were shared by the Minister of Health every day, mostly from all TV channels and some days from social media accounts. In this process, the meetings, where the minister gave information live, took place with the participation of all press members and after the announcement of the data, the press members asked questions. These meetings, which are held at the same hours every evening, have increased trust of public for the fight against the corona crisis and facilitated their participation in the policies followed.

There are three different elements of perception that need to be simultaneously managed by decision makers in order to declare a phenomenon a crisis: first, the threat to basic values; second, a sense of urgency; and third, the issue of uncertainty (Simons, 2014). The Crisis management forming 4 stages (prevention, preparedness, response, and reconstruction) is a tough task for political and bureaucratic leaders. The prime reason is that the requisites of crisis leadership are at odds with the requirements of effective reform (Boin and "T Hart, 2003).

Crisis management in Turkey, in the management of the outbreak since the first cases, the measures taken, test applications, bringing their citizens abroad, the implementation of quarantine them under state surveillance, has shown good success. There were no problems in the supply of social consumption and necessity goods, both hygiene and the timely delivery of food products to the market shelves, preventing the emergence of social panic. The needs of the elderly and disadvantaged people are met in their homes.

Turkey has been one of the most prepared countries caught coronavirus as infrastructure and crisis management. As early as January 10, under the chairmanship of the Minister of Health Fahrettin Koca, a Scientific Board was established according to the "Pandemic Influenza National Preparation Plan" prepared in previous years. With the recommendations of the Scientific Committee, it has taken quick and effective decisions, taking into account the health, social and economic aspects of the issue. As of the end of March, it has become one of the exemplary countries in crisis management. First of all, the arrival of the virus to the country was delayed, and he successfully managed prevention of crisis and preparedness to process which are the first phase of crisis management.

Of the many low- and middle-income countries that have introduced reforms to move toward universal health coverage in recent years (Sparkes et al., 2015). Turkey made remarkable progress in health status, patient satisfaction and financial risk protection with its ten-year Health Transformation Program. Based on Turkey's transformational experience, nine guiding principles are proposed (Akdag, 2015). These nine principles and managerial strategies, has facilitated being prepared Turkey’s attack against Corona with the robust infrastructure. It was decided that 14 days in quarantine for citizens coming to Turkey from abroad, public employees with chronic diseases could easily take leave, additional payments of health personnel would be improved for three months, and that 32 thousand new personnel would be employed. In order to strengthen the health infrastructure in this process, on April 6, 2020, the President informed that 1000-bed hospitals at Atatürk Airport and Sancaktepe will be completed within 45 days.

Some steps have been taken in the field of social aid for those affected by Covid-19 in Turkey. On March 21, 2020, it has been decided to give aid of 1000 lira to the families benefiting...
from social aid; In order to maintain social distance, aid money was paided to these families by PTT officers at their homes. In addition, under the presidency of governors and district governors, Vefa Social Support Groups ,which were organized by the governors and formed of Kızılay staff, local administrations, the representatives of official corporations and AFAD (DEMA-Disaster and Emergency Management Authority) have been established for citizens aged 65 and over who live alone and have no relatives to meet their needs and those with chronic diseases. In this context, it has been reported that as of May 4, 2020, financial and social support assistance exceeding 200 billion TL and cash aid of 1000 TL to 4 million 400 thousand citizens. In addition, medical supplies such as masks, overalls, diagnostic kits, respirators were provided to 57 different countries, creating a prestige in the international public opinion (TCCB, 2020).

With the Presidential Decree dated 13.04.2020 and numbered 2399, all citizens without health insurance were provided with coronavirus treatment opportunities (Official Gazette, 2020). In this period, one of the remarkable developments initiated by the President Erdogan on March 30, 2020 "Yet we Contact Turkey" has been a campaign to help. In this context, 1 billion 910 million TL was donated. It has been decided that scholarship and loan payments of higher education students will continue. On the other hand, it was decided to leave food and water in the living spaces of the animals for stray animals.

With a decrease in the number of deaths and cases in Turkey has started a restructuring phase in 1 July 2020 which is nextstep of crisis management. The period expressed as "controlled social life" by the Ministry of Health (TRMH, 2020); can be evaluated as the phase of returning to normal from the crisis phases.

Covid 19 is different from all crisis because of affecting the whole world and taking under the pressure of the health systems of the countries. Today, it is being talked about how the world will be after Covid-19. According to the World Health Organization, it is not clear when the virus will reduce its effect. That is why a cautious lifestyle began, which was called the "new normal" but never the old way of life. The "new normal" is a life style that is not normal but needs to be get used, one should be careful at all times and be careful against the virus at home and outside, masked, distant and 14 hygiene rules are applied.

As part of the normalization process, curfews and travel restrictions were lifted. Businesses that had been closed for a long time were opened. Citizens were allowed to use businesses such as restaurants, cafes, patisseries and tea gardens, paying attention to the social distance and mask rule. On June 9, 2020, within the framework of the new normalization steps, the street restriction was lifted for those under 18; Those over 65 were allowed to go out every day of the week between 10:00 and 20:00.

A strategic crisis communication plan is needed to minimize the damage caused by the crisis. For example, the first condition of this is that the public provides accurate and consistent information (Brent W. Ritchie 2004). Correct information provided during and after the crisis is important for close cooperation between all stakeholders and public health authorities (Jamal and Budke 2020). Wen et al. (2020), raised similar thoughts and worked on the subject with a team of tourism and public health academics. emphasize that the medical knowledge obtained about the disease should be shared in order to enable the public to learn. In tackling the coronavirus pandemic, information and communication technologies have helped both managers and leaders and citizens cope with difficult crisis conditions. For example, with a map application "Life is at home", citizens can follow whether there are people infected with the disease in their neighborhood and what kind of treatment or monitoring these people are under. In addition, this application warns in case of contact with coronavirus positive individuals. One of the efforts to control the crisis is contact tracking (Fillation). "Contact tracking" (fillation) is defined as the follow-up and screening of anyone with contact with the person carrying the disease in outbreaks. After the notification of
this follow-up case, it is very important to conduct a retrospective study to determine the source and the agent, and to take protection and control measures for potential contacts.

Participation, transparency, and accountability are three interrelated pillars of a good governance process. Turkey has done a lot to enhance its governance arrangements, especially in the last decade, as a consequence of pressures from outside (such as from EU and other international organizations) and/or demands from inside. These have always been matters of consideration with priority in government programs, plans, and strategies (Üstüner and Yavuz, 2018).

Social cohesion and cooperation problems observed during covid-19 control measures, even in many developed countries, show that social incompatibility is an important weakness in pandemic situations. Indeed, Turkey has had to take more stringent measures on March 27, 2020 for this problem. These measures, which slow down the spread of the epidemic, can be listed as continuous information, transparency, public service announcements, determination in implementation, incentives to measures, social cohesion and cooperation between institutions.

The “new normal” has brought measures and rules from the service sectors, mostly to the tourism sector. In order to overcome the crisis atmosphere and restart tourism activities, it is important to provide safe travel and accommodation opportunities, to inform people about the opportunities and to regain their trust. Safe Tourism Certification Program has been developed under the leadership of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in this regard, with the contributions of the Ministries of Health, Transport, Interior and Foreign Affairs (TGA 2020). Accreditation firms authorized by the Ministry carry out certification studies. Accommodation and food and beverage facilities are regularly inspected within the framework of hygiene and health criteria, and necessary sanctions are made for those who do not obey the rules.

The new normal lifestyle has also affected employers, employees, that is, business life. Eleven guides for each sector were published by the Ministry of Health Scientific Board regarding the measures to be taken by the workplaces. In this guide, advisory measures were shared with the public, taking into account the workplaces, characteristics of the work, and working conditions of the workers. For this, the employer is obliged to follow the recommendations of the Ministry of Health and the Scientific Committee.

In Turkey, for minimizing the impact of the epidemic mini, TL 100 billion Economic Stabilization Shield package is disclosed in the first place. In the package, steps to minimize the effects of the short-term demand shock are weighted. According to this:
- Providing 50-60 billion additional liquidity to the market in 3 months period,
- Postponement of principal and interest payments of all tradesmen,
- Public banks to assist tradesmen and SMEs for additional loan opportunities
- 1000 TL aid to those who are unemployed due to the crisis and those who seek aid (4.4 million people),
- Prohibition of dismissal for 3 months,
- The carrying out of short work allowance,
- Increasing the minimum pension to 1500 TL,
- Credit payments are postponed for 3 months,
- Appointment of 20 thousand new teacher
- Postponement of withholding, VAT (value added tax) and SSI (social security institution) premium payments for 6 months for priority sectors such as retail, shopping mall, automotive, logistics, which are most affected by the epidemic,
- Postponement of accommodation taxes in the tourism sector; In the transportation sector, the incentive of civil aviation with VAT discount, in the export sector; additional measures such as stock financing support to the exporter,
-1170 TL short-time work allowance per month for employees who have to take unpaid leave, steps such as.

As seen above; Compared to packages that Turkey has announced that the package of measures announced by the developed countries, said that the amount of the size of similar steps were taken outside.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

To be an agricultural country is one of the strengths in the process of struggle with Covid-19 for Turkey. During the outbreak, the food problem in Turkey is not expected. The strong and flexible manufacturing sector has the capacity to produce in a short time to meet the needs of medical ventilators, masks, medicines and disinfectants. Thus, Turkey was able to make medical assistance to the 57 countries in the crisis. Turkey with city hospital chain, recently has built Europe's largest hospital intensive care unit and has a high capacity. Powerful and organized health authority, experience and dedication of health personnel are Turkey's powerful features of the corona in the fight against the crisis. Turkey has the power to completely control the epidemic with its strong economy, strong administrative structure, strong health system, dedicated health personnel and social support.

Comparing the status of cases and the death occurred due to the corona in Turkey with other countries, it will be able to shed light on policy-making. The average Covid-19 cumulative death-case ratio of 140 countries whose data is reported in the ECDC (European Center for Disease Control) dataset is 4.78 as of April 12, 2020 (ECDC, 2020). Turkey's cumulative-cumulative death rate was 2.11 cases of 12 April 2020. This rate is about half of the average of countries with a population of over 75 million (4.29). This is Turkey's treatment and management of cases can mean that relatively successful.

Turkey has pursued a precaution strategy in the process of crisis management. It is observed that implementing a policy that observe the principles of risk management and crisis management in the process of Turkey's fight against the pandemic. Informing the public, efforts to prevent the spread, quarantine measures, participation in decision-making processes through the recommendations of the Scientific Committee, making statements based on evidence and data, and assuming responsibility for the areas of duty of institutions are proofs that crisis management is effectively implemented. Also; In this process, it can be stated that the preparedness plan and health infrastructure and other infrastructure facilities supporting the health infrastructure provide the preparedness and risk reduction stages of the risk management process.

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