Master Thesis

The Impact of Local Culture on Decision-Making in the Context of Crises Management

A Qualitative study on how Non-Profit Organizations operate in Crises with Different Cultural Settings

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Abstract

The growing number of global crises has increased the complexity of decision-making, as decisions are made under uncertainty in crises, especially when crises involve different cultures where people’s values, beliefs, and traditions are threatened. In crisis situations, people move from one place to another, mixing cultures in the environment where they arrive. Besides, those affected by crises usually receive help from non-profit organizations, as well as from international organizations. In this regard, the research aims to explore how local culture affects decision-making of leaders and decision makers in managing crises. The research relates to how leaders and decision makers regulate their decisions during crises with respect to local cultural values and context. To understand this phenomenon, the authors chose a qualitative method and conducted a series of in-depth interviews with leaders and decision makers of non-profit organizations to gather empirical data on how decisions are made in these organizations during crises in different cultural settings. The results of the research show that local culture has an undeniable impact on the decision-making process in crisis situations. The research found that decision makers must consider the local culture in every step of crisis response and ensure that their decisions are applicable within it. Participants argued that it is necessary for them to incorporate local cultural codes into their decisions in order to achieve their objectives.

Key words

Crisis Management, Cries, Decision-Making, Local Culture, Organizational Culture, Culture.
Acknowledgment

By Mehmet ŞAHİN

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Lastly, I am deeply indebted to my co-researcher, Mehmet Sahin and I am extremely lucky to have benefitted from working with him. Thank you.
Glossary of Abbreviations

- IFRC- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
- IOM-International Organization for Migration
- MHPSS- Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
- NGO-Non-Profit Organization
- UN-United Nations
- UNHCR- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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1 Introduction

1.1 A Glance of the Thesis

In recent decades, the world has been facing multiple crises such as war, poverty, financial emergencies, epidemics, and natural disasters. Since crises characteristics are typified by non-routine events which happen by complete surprise, and which threaten the existing values and functions, urgent actions should be taken in the situation of uncertainty (Boin, 2013). As crises strike, they raise the demand for functional mechanisms to deal with urgent needs of the affected population. Zhang, Zhou and Nunamaker Jr, (2002) state that to deal with crises in order to help reduce the damage in the right place at the right time, a decision-making process should be done in a way that allows decision makers to act effectively and consistently in a timely manner. Moreover, Simm (2020) argues that it is common for humanitarian organizations to prepare its staff with various aspects of crises response, such as cultural, religious contexts, ethical decision-making, and conflict resolution. Bhaduri (2019) emphasizes the importance of crisis prepared organizational culture in helping organizations shape the input (crisis from the organization’s external environment), process, and the output of crisis management. The author implies that it is vital to develop leadership competencies and crisis-prone culture (crisis prepared organizational culture).

As crises occur in different countries and cultures, organizations need to be able to operate in different cultural contexts. What works for one culture does not necessarily work in another.

According to UNHCR (2018) guidelines, each context is considered to have specific dynamics and each country is different in its framework, resources, and capacities. Differences among cultures as well distinct resources and dynamics can lead to difficulties when the same methods and strategies are deployed in crisis intervention within different cultures. It is also believed that
cultural and contextual adaptation of tools are vital, and taking a local
perspective may minimize risk of transcultural errors (UNHCR, 2011). IOM
(2012) points out in their guidelines that depending on the local cultural
context and needs of the local population, dialogues with people can be
straightforward and mediated for those concerned. Christensen et al. (2016)
has also mentioned that values and beliefs influence the decision-making
process and the way of actions. And since cultures affect individuals in
different ways and establish different rules or principles that provide guidance
for decision-making (Briley et al., 2000). Therefore, it is safe to assume that
differences in values, beliefs and any other cultural practices of societies can
lead to different actions and decisions when there are crises in which people
are vulnerable and sensitive.

Nevertheless, since organizations that intervene in crises to reduce impact on
people operate in different cultural contexts, it can be difficult to know all local
cultural codes, and can take time to deal with. Moreover, it is widely believed
that one of the key factors effectively interfering with emergency response is
to work with the suitable people in the right place and at the right time
(UNHCR, 2011). For example, women and girls may have to deal with
different experiences, specifically gender-related barriers that may require
necessary adaptation of crisis responses in the context of crisis situations
(UNHCR, 2018). Therefore, in crises, organizations that intervene sometimes
maximize the use of the country’s national staff and local partners are
considered to be more effective (UNHCR, 2011). It seems that those factors
need to be taken into consideration by the organizations that are handling
crises effects on the target population. As mentioned above, local culture
seems to have impact on the actions of the organizations in some sense, which
makes it necessary to examine the relationship between local culture, decision
making and crises with certain scientific methodology. In addition, regarding
crisis situations, local culture may not be limited as a certain culture of a
certain place, as the affected population may move from one place to another.
and be part of the new place. Hence, local culture may not be the one which belongs to only a certain place, but may instead refer to the mix of cultures that exist in a certain place and that consist of both host and affected population culture arriving there. In other words, those populations who are affected by crisis make significant cultural contributions to the culture which they arrive in (Mcauliffe and Khadria, 2020).

1.2 The General Problem, Research Questions, Aims, and purpose

The general problem that the research focuses on has its roots as:

According to Christensen et al. (2016), values, agency, and beliefs influence the decision-making process and the nature of action. Schneider, Barsoux and Stahl (2014) mention that it is important to pay attention to cultural differences in organizations' work, otherwise the consequences will be disastrous. The authors emphasize the importance of not only taking the consideration of behavior, values, and beliefs of other cultures, but also being careful not to underestimate those cultures. For example, the different logos of the IFRC (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent) take into account the culture of the context (religious) for the countries in which the organization operates. Thus, it seems obvious that culture should be presented alongside the process of organizational decision making. Marchisotti and Almeida (2018) point out that the decision-making process should take cultural differences into consideration. Regarding this, organizations should employ effort to learn about the relevant cultural aspects. Briley, Morris and Simonson (2000) mention the role of cultural knowledge in the organizational decision-making in understanding how people view the world. According to the authors, cultural knowledge is used as an interpretive tool that influences individual’s, namely decision makers’, perceptions about how to see the world. However, this cultural knowledge is only activated once the cultural differences are
understandable and taken into considerations in the organizational decision-making.

Furthermore, Rexhepi et al. (2020) discuss the role of cultural values in guiding both individual and strategic decisions, as they influence how decision makers generate and select strategies and goals. Indeed, this understanding refers to the significance of these cultural values and how vital it is for decision makers to understand the related cultural differences in these values.

Moreover, according to Ly (2020), it is difficult to take it for granted that any manager who is successful in one country will also be successful in another. It could be understood from Ly’s perspective that there are several factors that influence success that change between countries and seemingly between cultures.

Accordingly, it can be assumed that culture has a major impact on decision-making.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that leaders’ decision-making can be more difficult and important than little people’s decision making, because the decisions of leaders or managers affect not only themselves but also other people. However, when it comes to recovering from a crisis situation, decision-making could be extra difficult as it could be a matter of life and death. Dayton (2009) emphasizes that as “decision-making is particularly difficult during crises precisely because of the psychological and institutional challenges brought on by the combination of threat, urgency, and uncertainty” (Dayton, 2009:4).

This research is focusing on how local culture can influence the decision-making of leaders/decision makers when dealing with crises. In addition, the research chooses to study the case of non-profit organizations as they operate in crisis-based contexts that are based in different countries and associated with different cultures. Moreover, Ly (2020) mentions that the same decisions and ways of managing crises cannot be applied in all cultures. For instance, it
may not be appropriate to make the same decisions in both middle east countries and Nordic countries due to cultural differences between these two groups. Nevertheless, there could be other factors influencing the differences, however, this research does not focus on the cultural background of the participants, but it examines the impact of the local culture in which decisions in crisis situations are made.

However, apart from the literature, one of the authors of this research has been working in an international organization that is operating in a local culture environment and noticed that intentionally or unintentionally, decisions are made based on local cultural values, whether they are small or big decisions. Nevertheless, by reviewing previous studies, it has been noticed that although previously there is much research and studies on culture, decision making and crisis management. Yet, the study of those three phenomena together is rarely mentioned. However, even though the authors have some assumptions and thoughts about the relationship between these phenomena, the relationship needs to be examined in scientific method and researched to fully fill the gap in the previous studies.

The research’s main aim is to investigate whether current decision-making in crises adapt, struggle or ignore the local cultural values, behavior, and beliefs. The underlying purpose is to develop a new understanding and perspective of decision-making in crises based on the new understanding of this phenomenon.

This leads to formulating the first research question:

**RQ1: How are Decisions made in Crises?**

The first research question is formulated to explore, from both the literature and from the empirical data review, how decisions are made during crises. This question however, is answering one part of the research’ main aim, as local
culture is the other part, hence a second research question is formulated as the following:

**RQ2: What does Local Culture mean in Crisis perspective?**

The second research question is defining, from both the literature and from the empirical data review, what local culture is in a crisis point of view in order to understand its effects on decision-making from the same perspective.

However, although the two previous questions above are parts of the main research’ aim, it is obvious that they cannot sufficiently answer the research main aim until they are linked in one overall research question. Accordingly, the overall research question is:

**RQ3: How does Local Culture affect Crisis Decision-Making?**

This research question is more extended and specific and aims to explore the impact of local culture, which is defined in RQ2, on crisis decision-making, which is defined in RQ1.

### 1.3 Research Outlines

This study consists of six different chapters with multiple subtitles in each chapter. The introduction section in the *first chapter* includes a glance on the thesis, the general problem, the research, the aim, the purpose, and the questions. The *second chapter*, methodology, consists of; research design and approach, qualitative methods and research philosophy, research strategy, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, research limitations, and research credibility. The *third chapter* is the theoretical framework in which the three main concepts of the research are addressed: crisis management, decision-making, and organizational culture. The chapter ends with a summary of the three concepts. The *fourth chapter* presents the empirical data review, which is collected from the interviews with leaders/decision makers in
international organizations in terms of the three theoretical concepts presented in the previous chapter. The fifth chapter is the discussion part, where the authors of this research answer the research questions by linking the collected data with previous literature review and then making the final assumption. The sixth chapter (the last one) is the conclusion, where the authors reflect with the main result, the key conclusions, several contributions, and then make suggestions for future studies.
2 Methodology

In this chapter, the chosen research design is presented, and methods and philosophy are evaluated. This chapter also presents how research strategy is created, and how data is collected and analyzed in the research. Finally, this chapter presents and outlines its ethical considerations, limitations, and credibility.

2.1 Research Design and Approach

Research design is the blueprint to fulfil research aims and answer research questions (Adams, Khan and Raeside, 2014). The study aims to explore how the culture of the context affects decision-making in crisis situations. The exploratory study focuses on gaining new insights and seeks a better understanding of the problem or the phenomena by asking what is happening (Saunders et al., 2019). Moreover, exploratory research is used to investigate phenomena that are poorly understood (Cresswell, 2007). Inherent in this exploration is the understanding of the following:

- What organizational culture international organizations have.
- The role of organizational culture that international organizations have in making decisions during crises.
- The impact of local culture on the decision-making process and decision-making culture in crisis situations.
- How decisions (both formal and informal) are made in international organizations during crises.

The study focuses on studying aspects which are rarely raised together. Therefore, in-depth interviews with decision makers in international organizations are planned to see the reality through their eyes (Jacobvitz, Curran and Moller, 2002) and then go back and look for the theories needed
to better understand their experience and then analyze the data. Moreover, the study is using the inductive approach as it is aiming to gain a better understanding of the way in which we as humans interpret the world around us (Saunders et al., 2019). In addition, the study is rooted in observation and based on empiricism, in which the study: - investigates a phenomenon in its real-life context, engages with many variables of interest with limited control over events, and utilizes multiple sources of evidence (Saunders et al., 2019). Therefore, inductive reasoning is considered to be the best way for conducting the study. The study conducts qualitative interviews to explore and learn from the phenomenon.

2.2 Qualitative Methods and Research Philosophy

Qualitative data refers to non-numeric data like words (Lewis, Saunders and Thornhill, 2019), thus the study is qualitative in which data are collected from interviews and analyzed systematically. Moreover, qualitative methods can be used with inductive approaches whom the study is adopting since the study is based on empiricism (Lewis, Saunders and Thornhill, 2019). Furthermore, the study is inspired by the social constructivism philosophy as it develops subjective meaning and the goal of the study depends on the participants’ view (as decision makers) of reality (Cresswell, 2007) in order to understand the influence of local culture on their decision-making in crises. Social constructivism refers to the study of knowledge about reality, not the reality itself as fully knowable external reality (Quinn Patton, 2002). In addition, since the study conducts in-depth interviews, the researchers, as social constructivists, listen carefully to what participants say or do in their life setting and questions in the interviews are intentionally formed broad and general so that the participants have the opportunity to create a meaning of a situation (Cresswell, 2007). Furthermore, in social constructivism, any phenomenon can only be understood in a specific context with which the study focuses on (Quinn Patton, 2002). Therefore, the study does not generalize
findings from one context to another. Lastly, under the constructivist perspective in ontology as relativist (multiple realities) and in epistemology as subjectivist (Quinn Patton, 2002), the researchers recognize that their own background (including personal, cultural, and historical experience) shape their interpretations while they make sense of the meanings that others provide about the world (Cresswell, 2007).

2.3 Research Strategy – Multiple Case Study

The research is doing grounded theory as a strategy in which the data is collected and generated through a series of observations and interviews using the inductive approach (Lewis, Saunders and Thornhill, 2019). The strategy of grounded theory is based on the fact that the research moves beyond description to generate explanations of processes, actions, and interactions that are shaped by the views of participants (Cresswell, 2007). Furthermore, the research conducts several case studies as a comparative approach, the same questions are asked in several related organizations. The strategy of case studies can be used for specific phenomena in specific settings, and it allows research to explore real-life issues that are too complex for surveys or experimental strategies (Adams, Khan and Raeside, 2014). Furthermore, since case studies help the research to generate answers to ‘why’, ‘what’, and ‘how’ questions (Lewis, Saunders and Thornhill, 2019), the strategy of case study is selected because it goes in line with the research aims and the research question. Moreover, the research uses multiple case studies rather than a single one because it helps the research to generalize from the findings, since using the multiple cases focuses on the need to establish whether the findings can be the same in all cases (Lewis, Saunders and Thornhill, 2019).

Nevertheless, since all participants are from completely different contexts, where each context has its own environment, circumstances, and culture, therefore, the focus in the empirical data review is on the participants as such
and on using the cases as a background to each participant so that the researchers are able to study each context separately.

2.4 Data Collection

The collecting part in the study is done by utilizing both primary and secondary data from the chosen cases. Primary data is collected through conducting in-depth interviews with leaders and decision makers in international organizations that operate in areas where crises are most likely to occur. Secondary data is also collected to gain a better understanding of the organizational culture. Secondary data is utilized from document secondary data such as journals and reports that belong to the organizations under study (Lewis, Saunders and Thornhill, 2019). To reach participants, the researchers use their personal networks, email, social media, and LinkedIn to access to various leaders and decision makers in international organizations. The researchers explain in their emails the validity of the study along with Linnaeus university’ ethical considerations for data collection sessions. Once the researchers receive the initial commitments from potential candidates, they send information about the topic and the type of questions to the candidate so that they can prepare their answers in the interview. The study uses in-depth interviews as a completely exploratory approach to explore about the study’s area of interest in depth (Lewis, Saunders and Thornhill, 2019). Moreover, in-depth interviews give the researcher the opportunity to explore a small number of participants and explore their perspective on certain ideas (Jacobvitz, Curran and Moller, 2002).

Questions in the interviews are open-ended, fact-based before opinion-based, and probes are used as needed (e.g., asking for examples, elaborating answers, and more explanations) (Jacobvitz, Curran and Moller, 2002). Furthermore, the questions are not theory-grounded, but they are oriented toward the phenomenon based on three fundamental concepts; Crisis Management, Decision Making, and Culture (see Appendix A – interview guide). Seven
interviews are conducted, and all of them are conducted remotely using Zoom application due to: 1- travelling restriction due to Covid-19 pandemic, 2- lower costs since the researchers are master students at Linnaeus university, and since both the researchers and the participants are geographically dispersed. Each interview takes about 60 to 90 minutes to conduct, using the English language since all participants are working in international organizations in which English is official language. The interviews are audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed solely. Both the researchers are present in all conducted interviews.

2.4.1 Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical sampling is applied as a method of data collections based on concepts derived from data (Juliet and Strauss, 2008). Theoretical sampling allows participants to be theoretically chosen for interviews (Cresswell, 2007). Moreover, theoretical sampling is responsive to the data, which makes the sampling open and flexible, participants talk about the data in the interviews and then concepts are derived from these data. The analysis begins as the data are collected, the analysis will lead to concepts, and concepts will generate questions (Juliet and Strauss, 2008). In other words, collecting and analyzing data is formed in a circle of gathering data, analyzing them, back to the field to gather more data and so forth (Cresswell, 2007), until the point of saturation is reached where concepts do not generate more questions and all concepts should be defined and explained (Juliet and Strauss, 2008).

A specific type of international organization is not necessary to answer the question. However, since the area of interest to the study is about crises as such, it was decided to conduct interviews with leaders and decision-makers of NGOs’, as these types of organizations are international with mostly multinational staff, so the aspect of culture is under study on top of that, NGOs are well-known organizations as they are usually on the front line dealing with
crises when they occur. A further elaborate narrative of the organizations and the participants are in chapter 2.4.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>NGO</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asif</td>
<td>Case1 / NGO 1</td>
<td>Chief of Missions</td>
<td>23/04/2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricardo</td>
<td>Case 2 / NGO 1</td>
<td>Head of Country Office</td>
<td>06/05/2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmad</td>
<td>Case 3 / NGO 2</td>
<td>Chief of Missions</td>
<td>28/04/2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Case 4 / NGO 2</td>
<td>Chief of Missions</td>
<td>06/05/2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Case 5 / NGO 3</td>
<td>Chief of missions</td>
<td>04/05/2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samer</td>
<td>Case 6 / NGO 4</td>
<td>Chief of Mission</td>
<td>07/05/2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Case 7 / NGO 5</td>
<td>Director of Continent</td>
<td>08/05/2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Selection of participants

2.4.2 Cases

2.4.2.1 Case 1- NGO 1

In the first case, it is an international organization that has been providing humanitarian aid in all countries for more than a hundred years. Like all other international humanitarian organizations, it has its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. The organization has more than 150,000 branches and more than 10 million volunteers and thousands of employees. The organization provides aid for to the people who are affected by health crises, disasters and also the organization makes risk management as well. There are two participants from this organization working in two different countries.

2.4.2.2 Case 2- NGO 2

This case is also an international humanitarian organization. The organization is older than 50 years and it is an UN agency that also operates in many countries around the world, in more than 150 countries. The headquarters of
the organization is located in Geneva, Switzerland. The organization provides different aid to people who are affected by disasters and operates with more than ten thousand employees. There are two participants from this organization working in two different countries.

2.4.2.3 Case 3- NGO 3

The third case is also a humanitarian organization operating around the world. The organization was founded about a hundred years ago by a person to help certain age groups in disasters. Now the organization is working in more than hundred of countries with more than twenty thousand employees, and operating with many different partners consisting of companies, and states. There is one participant from this organization.

2.4.2.4 Case 4- NGO 4

The fourth case is a country's red crescent that is supported by the government, but with principles that include independence. The organization is also older than a hundred years old and operates in more than sixty countries. The organization provides aid in the field of migration, education and health facilities, as well as all other issues related to disaster management.

2.4.2.5 Case 5- NGO 5

The final case is an organization that is more likely to work in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development, education and migration. The organization operates in more than 60 countries with more than twenty thousand employees. There is one participant from this organization.

Data Analysis

Each of the seven case studies are interviewed and transcripted individually, then a narrative story about each one is presented and arranged in
chronological order (Cresswell, 2007). This is to be decided since every case has its uniqueness and represents the reality about different decision makers in different contexts. The data analysis part is inspired by grounded theory and thus the analysis begins with an attempt to make sense of data transcripts, extracting concepts and variables to gain an understanding of what is going on, and then to link sets of concepts that can be linked together towards a theory, taking into consideration the existing literature (Adams, Khan and Raeside, 2014). However, this research does not aim to develop a theory, but to get a better understanding about the phenomenon using the inspiration of grounded theory. In addition, the sets of concepts that can be linked together are categorized using open coding. The names of categories are utilized based on actual terms that are used by the participants, and also based on terms used in existing theory and literature (Lewis, Saunders and Thornhill, 2019). The main categories analyzed in this research; 1- Decision-Making in Crisis Management, 2. Local Culture in Crisis Decision-Making.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Saunders et. al. (2019) points out that ethical issues must be prepared for and considered from the very beginning of any research. The ethical concern in this research is started to be taken into consideration in all stages of the research, which can be listed as designing and planning the research, seeking access to potential participants for the research, conducting interviews, analyzing data, reporting the results, and finally destroying the records of the interviews. In designing and planning of the research, researchers formulate research questions and domains in a way that does not cause harm, stress to anyone, especially participants. Those harms can be financial, psychological, or social which are protected in data collection process, data analyzing and reporting steps. The researcher, who does not have any relationship with any of those participants is reached out via LinkedIn, where they explain the
intended research topic, process, and the method of reporting. According to Mauthner et. al. (2002), consent should be ongoing during the process, and it also should be rediscussed and renegotiated between researcher and participants of the research during the data collection process. Therefore, participants were informed in writing when they were first connected, and they were also given detailed information about research and consent during the interview. Issues of participant anonymity and confidentiality are the most important things in ethical research practice and are milestone concepts for all professional researchers of social science (Wiles, 2013). Therefore, in this research, information of the participants are only accessible for the two researchers, and even the supervisor of the research does not access any confidential information of the participants. In addition, a nickname is used for each participant in the current research and the names in the research do not have any relation with information of the participant and those names were randomly given by the researchers. Also, the participants in the research do not know each other. Moreover, there are also some ethical issues that must be considered by the researchers during data collection and sharing them in the research. The questions of the research are shared with all participants to let them think about it, which makes the participants think about the answer in detail, and only the things expressed by participants are included, which brings objectivity to the research.

2.6 Research Limitations

As every research has limitations, there are some limitations of this research as well. One of the limitations can be about the questions of interviews. According to Polit & Beck (2012), data collection tools may not have sufficient psychometric reliability or validity, which refers to credibility for qualitative research. However, Connelly (2013) states that if the data collection tool is the only one available, the researcher may still choose to use
it. For the current research, since there is not a question tool that fits with their aims, the researchers prepare and plan the questions in a detailed and critical manner. Another limitation is that the research is conducted with a limited number of seven participants. Even though researchers insist on having equal participants from both genders, only one invited female has agreed to be a participant.

2.7 Research Credibility

The credibility of can be counted as one of the most important parts of research and must be considered in different stages of research. Credibility is one of the concepts proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) for trustworthiness and quality in naturalistic inquiry. According to Polit & Beck (2012), credibility of research refers to the truth of the data that was collected or the views of the participants and how researchers interpret and present these in their research. According to Patton (1999), the issue of credibility of a qualitative inquiry depends on three different but related elements: first, well-structured techniques and methods are needed to collect high-quality data, and the data must be carefully analyzed, with attention to issues of reliability, validity, and triangulation; second, the credibility of the researcher, which is related to their experience, training, status, track record, and self-presentation; and third is philosophical approach to value of qualitative inquiry, which refers to a fundamental appreciation of naturalistic inquiry, qualitative methods, purposeful sampling, and holistic thinking.

As mentioned earlier, the current research used well-structured techniques and methods to collect high quality data and analyze them in a rigorous manner. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose that it is necessary to specify a way of establishing and assessing the quality of qualitative research that provides an alternative to reliability and validity. The authors propose two different criteria for assessing qualitative study: Trustworthiness and Authenticity.
Trustworthiness is made up of four criteria, each of which has an equivalent criterion in qualitative research: credibility parallels internal validity, transferability parallels external validity, dependability parallel to reliability and confirmability parallels to objectivity. In this research, as it is mentioned above, the interviews with participants are recorded and transcripted, then the results are discussed considering various sources.

According to Cope (2014), in order to support credibility of a research, when reporting a qualitative study, the researcher should be able to provide benefits in different ways, such as demonstrating engagement, methods of observation, and audit trials. As it is seen in sampling of the research, it can be clearly seen that sampling from different organizations and countries, secondary sources are highly used which have increased credibility of the current research.

According to Golafshani (2003), reliability refers to consistency of the collected data and results over time, and if the results and data can be found under a similar methodology, then it can be said that the research instrument is reliable. In this research, interview questions are neutral and do not direct participants to any specific response for which can be said congruence with definition of reliability. In the same research of Golafshani (2003), it is said that validity is referring to whether the research is measuring what it is supposed to measure. By asking for elaboration as well as open-ended questions, asking about examples they faced and conducting in-depth interviews. Therefore, all data collection tools and processes were designed to obtain the most neutral and objective data from participants, which should increase validity of the research.

Triangulation can strengthen the credibility of the current study since the current has been collected from multiple sources. Interviewing participants who have both different education and experience backgrounds and currently working in different organizations who operate in different countries and cultures brings about seeing the response from a different perspective.
3 Theoretical Framework

This chapter focuses on three main concepts: crisis management, decision-making, and organizational culture. These three concepts are presented in the light of the concepts that have emerged in the interviews.

3.1 Crisis Management

This research considers crisis management in a general management term, nevertheless, before defining the concept of crisis management, an explanation of the crisis is necessary to be presented in order to understand what aspects of crisis management are in focus in this research.

3.1.1. Background

It is known that life is not a bed of roses, it is rather a way full of obstacles and discomforts. Mankind has gone through one crisis after another, caused either by man or nature, and there are two certain things that always come with crisis, uncertainty and the created chaos (Mukhopadhyay, 2005). Boin (2013) defines crisis as non-routine events that occur completely by surprise and threaten people's prevailing values and functions, thus crisis should be dealt with urgently under the situation of uncertainty. Eventually, after the disorders and chaos resulting from a crisis, new orders will emerge, and overcoming a crisis allows one to learn to deal with similar crises, either by preventing them or by managing them after they occur. Indeed, when a crisis is managed in an appropriate manner, a state of peace and tranquility will be achieved (Mukhopadhyay, 2005).

Hannes and Alvintzi, (2010) describe crises as abnormal events that cause dramatic or catastrophic impact on business corporations and/or the society. Besides, according to the same authors, crises have the capability of causing lots of negative impacts on many life aspects, for example, causing harm to people or destroying property and/or the environment.
Hannes and Alvintzi (2010) suggest the any crisis can have three elements:

1- A threat to business corporations and/or the society.
2- Hard to predict because it usually happens by surprise.
3- It happens so fast that it is difficult to make the necessary decisions to eliminate its negative effects.

Pecujlija and Cosic (2019) suggest two criteria to classify crises with common characteristics to have the ability to avoid crises or cope with them:

- **Predictability**: A crisis can be predictable if the time, the place or at least the way in which it might occur is known. Predictability can be related to the characteristics of the crisis itself, or it can be related to the quality of crisis management or to the efficiency of technical systems.

- **Possibility of affecting**: In order to know whether crises can be influenced, it is necessary to distinguish between proactive and reactive capabilities of influence. Since it is related to the ability of predicting the crisis. Thus, using reactive responses within reasonable time frames is the best way to keep the crisis under control or to minimize the damage by counteracting the crisis causes. Therefore, crises can be influenced when the reactive responses are known and can be given.

According to Pecujlija and Cosic (2019) crises can be divided into four different categories depending on their types, frequency, and relevant countermeasures:

**Conventional Crises**: They are related to those kinds of crises that can be predicted and are possible to be influenced by known measures. An illustrative example of them can be related to crises caused by accidents with
technological systems. Natural or social crises do not usually fit into conventional crises.

- **Unexpected Crises**: In this category, crises are vulnerable to be influenced, but they are difficult to predict. It is also difficult to predict how they will occur. Natural and social disasters can be the most common form of this category. However, productive organizational measures can be decentralized by decision makers to enhance the possibility to intervene quickly when an unexpected crisis happens.

- **Severe Crises**: are related to those with large and dangerous damage like earthquakes or global changes. Although the danger they impose is well known and can be predicted and located in place and time, it is still difficult to put a suitable mechanism of action against their danger due to the complexity aspects of these crises. Since these crises usually affect a number of organizations or societies, dealing with these kinds of crises is usually done beyond the organizational level; instead, politics, regulations, and cooperation are the main players in managing these crises.

- **Fundamental Crises**: the most dangerous with enormous destructive potential. The hardest part of dealing with these crises is that they occur suddenly, which makes them impossible to predict and thus cannot be prepared for, on top of the almost non-existent possibility of influencing them. Fundamental crises can take the form of natural and technological accidents, but also, they can take the form of social crises as well. Asking for help from expert groups is usually used to predict future crises and therefore to prepare suitable countermeasures.

### 3.1.2. Conceptualizing Crisis Management

Many definitions about crisis management have been found in the literature:
Hannes and Alvintzi (2010) define crisis management as the act of intervention or coordination by people as individuals or larger groups. The authors explain this act as it is done before, during, or after the event of the crisis in order to handle it, minimize the loss of it, or as an act of protection from it. It seems obvious that this definition is taking crisis management as a general term.

Pecujlija and Cosic, (2019) bring another dimension to crisis management by using the cognitive approach in an organizational crisis perspective. In this regard, the authors take three key assumptions: first, that crisis is an uncertain, complex, and emotional event that can bring conflict between different parties; second, information processing is limited among people during crisis; and third, irrational decision-making, biases, and other inconsistencies make crises getting out of control. Taking the third assumption into consideration, it is reasonable to assume that the way the organization will react to a crisis, is what will determine the outcome of it. In other words, the outcomes that follow a crisis depend on how the organization will behave during the crisis (Kramer and Tyle, 1995). Moreover, the cognitive approach considers the solution to overcome or to minimize the low cognitive ability within individuals during crisis is on the organizational level (Pecujlija and Cosic, 2019).

Pearson and Clair (1998) present a definition from a management theory perspective:

“Organizational crisis management is a systematic attempt by organizational members with external stake-holders to avert crises or to effectively manage those that do occur.” (Pearson and Clair, 1998:61)

An alternative view of organizational crisis takes an explicit consideration of psychological, social-political, and technological-structural issues. In this regard, all types of organizational crises are taken to be defined together according to a number of shared elements between them. In this regard, an organizational crisis is an event with low possibility to happen but with high-impact when it happens, its cause and effect are considered ambiguous, and
means of resolution as well decisions must be made quickly (Pearson and Clair, 1998).

King, (2002) argues that the effectiveness of crisis management depends on several team related factors such as: group familiarity, team composition (homogeneity/heterogeneity), task knowledge, leadership ability, and organizational culture. These factors can play a significant role and influence an organization’s response to a crisis.

The effectiveness of crisis management can also be seen when operations create a sense of sustainability, meaning that crisis management operations should not only function in a short run, but also it should create a learning curve so that lessons are transferred to future crisis. Or as it stated in the following definition suggested in the organizational literature: “Organizational crisis management effectiveness is evidenced when potential crises are averted or when key stakeholders believe that the success outcomes of short- and long-range impacts of crises outweigh the failure outcomes.” (Pearson and Clair, 1998:61)

![Figure 1](image)

Figure 1. Factors which may influence crisis management & team effectiveness - (King, 2002:239)

Coombs, (2007) states that effective crisis management should handle the threats sequentially and address public safety as the primary concern.
3.1.3. Crisis Management Cycle

The cycle can be divided as a process into three phases: 1- pre-crisis: a preparation to prevent a crisis, 2- crisis response, and 3- post-crisis: evaluation from feedback and from follow-up information to better prepare for the next crisis (Coombs, 2007).

Hannes and Alvintzi (2010) argue that the crisis management cycle should have a process of strategic planning for a crisis as a turning point in which the organization will have a better control of its own destiny to make crucial decisions under the situation of uncertainty. In this regard, crisis management is divided into different phases that are connected among themselves, making a cycle as in figure 2.

![Figure 2. Crisis Management Cycle- (Hannes & Alvintzi, 2010:11)](image_url)

Boin, (2005) discusses five key challenges in the crisis management cycle from a leadership perspective. These challenges are described and formed as interrelated and interacting tasks or elements throughout a crisis response network: 1- sensemaking, as it refers to the interpretation of the reality of the crisis as its nature is usually complex and ambiguous. 2- decision-making, meaning leaders’ decisions or series of decisions during crisis. 3- meaning-making, or how leaders communicate their definition of the situation to others in the organization or to the whole society. 4- termination, as it is the act of
returning from emergency to the normal state. And 5- learning, as lessons
drawing from the crisis and how it is handled.

According to Pursiainen, (2018) a so called “standard version” of crisis
management cycle is a cycle that includes at least the three major phases; pre-
crisis, during-crisis, and post crisis-phases, and then, it can be further divided
into more detailed phases as it seems in figure 3:

![Crisis Management Cycle](image)

Figure 3. Crisis Management Cycle with more detailed and prescriptive phases – (Pursiainen, 2018: 5)

3.1.4. Organizational Response to Crisis

Unless the crisis is avoided, the response phase is the starting point from the
standard crisis management cycle (Pursiainen, 2018). However, activities in
this phase should begin from the evaluation part, then to rescue commitment,
and then crisis management from the different aspects (human, material,

Coombs (2007) divides crisis response into two sections; first, the initial
response section, which introduces crisis response guidelines in three points:
1 -be quick, 2- be accurate, and 3- be consistent. And second, the reputation
repair and behavioral intentions section, which implies that the response
should focus more on those who are affected than on addressing organizational
concerns.

Hart, Rosenthal and Kouzmin (1993) point out that organizational crisis
response is determined by two organizational levels, the strategic and the
operational level. The authors emphasize the importance of distinguishing
these two levels in crisis situations. According to the authors, the distinction can be seen from two points; firstly, the strategic refers to the top level of the organizational response, while the operational level is related to the first-line response where the organizational policy is applied. And secondly, the importance of the so-called 'local presence' of people at the operational level, which gives them the advantage with the knowledge of the social and the political circumstances of the crisis area.

3.1.5. Crisis Preparedness

Crisis preparedness can be organized by the crisis management team, which works full time on planning on how to manage the potential crisis (Mukhopadhyay, 2005). Carmeli and Schaubroeck (2008) define crisis-preparedness as “the extent to which the organization is prepared to cope with immediate and future crisis situations” (Carmeli and Schaubroeck, 2008:184). In that sense, the authors divide crisis-preparedness into present crisis-preparedness, which measures an organization's ability to deal with an immediate crisis, and prospective crisis-preparedness, which measures an organization's ability to deal with a potential crisis in the future. Moreover, the authors state that crisis preparedness can be influenced by leaders’ perceptions of the risk that the crisis might occur in the future, and therefore to decide on the crisis preparedness activities.
3.2 Decision Making

3.2.1. Background on Decision Theory

People make decisions all the time, from tiny insignificant things to major crucial choices. Decision theory is indeed, a theory about decisions, and it is related to human activities, therefore, decision theory has its relation with behaviors and activities aimed at achieving certain goals in the presence of certain options (Hansson, 1994).

Decision Theory can be discussed from two perspectives, the normative (how decisions should be made), and the descriptive (how decisions are actually made) (Hansson, 1994). However, some theories adopt the two decision-making models; the intuitive one, in which conscious results are generated through unintended, unconscious, and uncontrollable processes; and the rational one, which generates same conscious results but with more intentional, conscious, and controlled processes, by using quantitative methods such as the decision tree (Marchisotti and Almeida, 2018). Lee and Stinson (2014) argue that the rational model may make more sense because it relies more on a systematic methodology to make good decisions, while intuitive decisions are mostly based on experience without explicitly involving logic in them. However, the authors state that effective decision makers are those who can combine the two models together.

3.2.2. Decision-Making Process

Most decisions are not a product of the moment, they rather take time and can be divided into different steps, and that is called the decision process (Hansson, 1994). In that sense, many decision-making models were produced; for example, Lee and Stinson (2014) present the rational model and the bounded rationality perspective, both were developed by Herbert Simon. According to the authors, in the rational model, decision-making is a straightforward process that consists of three steps; 1- identify the problem, 2- consider the alternative
solutions, and 3- select a solution and apply it. In the bounded rationality perspective however, there are many constraints that may prevent decision makers from making optimal decisions. These constraints can be either in time, information, and/or resources, or they can be personal constraints, such as the personal decision style, or they can be organizational constraints, such as the organizational culture or the organizational ethical values (See figure 4). Pomerol et al. (2004) argue that the rational model is concerned with matching the means to end, and decisions can only be evaluated if decision makers’ objectives are known. The authors continue to explain how Simon developed the bounded rationality in decision making in depending on the relationship between objectives and decisions where objectives, constraints, and means can interchangeably play the role in defining the decision problem. By this regard, the authors explain how any main factor in any step in the management process can be an objective, mean, or constraint, for example, a decision about decreasing can represent a production can be an objective, mean, or constraint. Selart (2017) states that objectives and means are intertwined in the decision process and therefore they have to be evaluated synchronously.

![Figure 4. Bounded Rationality Model – (Lee and Stinson, 2014:12)](image-url)
Hansson (1994) refers to a non-sequential decision model developed by Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Théorêt in 1976. The model is based on Simon’s model and includes three phases; identification, development, and selection phases. Each of these phases has a number of routines (See figure 5). The purpose of this model is to make the decision process circular rather than linear, meaning a decision maker can cycle back within each phase to investigate more or to gain more clarity to understand the problem he/she is solving.

Figure 5. Relationship between phases and routines - (Hansson, 1994:92)

### 3.2.3. Organizational Decision-Making

Decision-making on the individual level is no different from the organizational level (Marchisotti and Almeida, 2018).

Selart (2017) presents what he calls a collective mind, which refers to leaders’ sensemaking in decision-making, where they share their perceptions and expectations with all team members so that the whole team will reach a form of shared understanding. The author means that in this regard, tacit knowledge will help decision makers on how to act. Selart (2017) emphasizes on the importance for decision makers to have a good knowledge regarding their organizational culture, because all decisions are affected by the organizational culture. For example, the author gives that an authoritarian organizational culture can imply a form of bureaucracy, whilst an innovative and progressive
organizational culture can be a sign that leaders have more freedom to make intuitive decisions.

Selart (2017) divides organizational decisions into three levels, first, decisions on the *strategic* level that consider the long-term consequences and decide on the organization’s general direction. Second, decisions on the *tactical* level, which they supposed to support strategic decisions. And third, decisions on the *operational* level, as they are decisions with short-term consequences and they are supposed to support the tactical decisions. The author points out that organizational decisions in all levels are in constant interactions with each other.

Marchisotti and Almeida (2018) discuss decision-making in the hierarchical levels, in the sense that every level has its own knowledge of information, i.e., the data and the facts needed to make decisions, the authors argue that a decision-making process which is based on the highest hierarchical level is a better way to be innovative in the hierarchical system, especially with the lack of clear alternatives to choose from.

### 3.2.4. Crisis Decision-Making

First thing to consider regarding making decisions during crises is to ensure that the decision maker has the necessary quality required on the ground at the right time (Bruce Ho et al., 2010).

Sayegh, Anthony and Perrewé (2004) present a conceptual model of decision-making under crisis. The authors explain that decision-making processes under crises are intuitive since there is no space for rational decisions in crisis situations. Moreover, the suggested conceptual model has it that both emotions and tacit knowledge are core elements in the intuitive decisions under crises. In addition, according to ’t Hart, Rosenthal and Kouzmin (1993), the decision-making processes tend to be more informal in crisis situations.
Crisis decision-making can be discussed from the hierarchical perspective; Hart, Rosenthal and Kouzmin (1993) distinguish the difference between strategic decisions and operational ones in the crisis response, in this perspective, strategic decisions focus on making the choice about how to respond to crises either by deciding to act or not to act on certain events. On the other hand, operational decisions are considering the implementation, which make operational decisions focus on the details and the techniques of the implementation. Therefore, the authors believe that under crisis situations, strategic decisions are best to be made on the lowest level possible in the organizational hierarchy.

3.2.5. Centralization of Decision-Making

Hart, Rosenthal and Kouzmin (1993) state that centralized decision-making can be presented in three different forms, first, concentrated power in a small group of decision makers. Second, concentrated power for decisions in a central government, regional authority, or local agency. Third, a takeover of the lead by the strongest leadership under special circumstances such as certain crises. Bakonyi (2018) defines centralization in three different perspectives of strategic management. Strategy making, where centralization can appear when strategic decisions have to be authorized from the upper level in the organizational hierarchy. Implementation, centralization here depends on how far the implementer can decide on the strategic decisions. Feedback, when details and reports are frequently demanded to be sent to the head office, then it can be said the feedback is centralized.

3.2.6 Decision-Making in different cultural contexts

Decision-making can be influenced by the difference of culture. Yates and de Oliveira (2016) discuss the impact of the cultural differences, namely individualism -collectivism, on the mindsets of the decision makers. For example, in collectivistic cultures, personal behavior will generally fit into
social context to achieve group goals, and therefore collectivists lean to have input from others more than individualists when they make decisions. The authors point out cognitive style as a famous framework to study cultural decision-making differences as it is related to social orientation. In this regard, collectivists are associated with holistic thinking, while individualists are more analytical thinkers, which explain how and why people’s decision-making varies among different cultures.

Furthermore, Müller, Spang and Ozcan (2009) study cultural differences in decision-making styles, the study results that the personality of individuals attributes to differences in decision-making styles. The authors explain that the personality of individuals is the fruit of the value system (or the national culture) in which those individuals were upraised. The authors emphasize the significant effect of the national culture from early childhood on molding the personality of its individuals.
3.3 Organizational Culture

3.3.1 Background of Culture

Many definitions of culture exist in literature since it is a term that cannot be defined with certainty. American anthropologists Kroebber and Kluckhohn (1952) have reviewed different concepts, views, and definitions of culture, and they prepared 164 different definitions (cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2012). Whiten et. al., (2011) argues that culture can be thought of as something that all individuals are learning from each other that is expressed as “endures to generate customs and traditions, shapes vast swathes of human lives” (p.3). According to Stroh et al., (2002), one of the difficulties in conducting cultural research is to understand what “culture” is and how to define it, since many definitions, dimensions, conceptualizations, and description of culture exist in related literature of culture (cited Bader et al., 2012). Robbins (1983) states in his study that culture as a term has been generally understood as one of anthropological issues, while Lewis (1996) is mentioning that culture is an interdisciplinary phenomenon that combines different area that can be listed as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and social psychology (cited in Carvalho et. al. 2017).

Hofstede’s cultural perspective can be given a bit more attention in research. Professor Geert Hofstede defines culture as: “The programming of the human mind by which one group of people distinguishes itself from another group” (Hofstede Insights, 2021). According to Hofstede's perspective, culture consists of different layers, and he compares it to the shape of an onion. On the first layer of this onion are symbols, such as food, colors, monuments or logos. The second layer consists of heroes that may come from real life, such as statesmen, athletes, public figures, company founders, or maybe some other figures that are known as superheroes in popular culture. The third layer, which is closest to the core consists of rituals, sauna, karaoke, or meetings (Hofstede Insights, 2021). Hofstede mentioned several models that seem to be
one perspective of this study. Hofstede (2011) conceptualized 6 dimensions models which consist of: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity, Long/Short Term Orientation, and Indulgence/Restraint. Each of them refers to a different side of culture.

'Power distance' refers to the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations, groups and/or institutions (like the family) accept and also expect that power is unequally distributed. The second one is uncertainty avoidance, which is not the same as risk avoidance, it deals with a society's tolerance for ambiguity. Hofstede (2011) defines third one as ‘Individualism vs collectivism’ which refers to integration of people into groups. It is societal, instead of individual characteristic. The fourth concept mentioned by Hofstede is ‘masculinity and femininity’ for which he says that masculinity is in contrast to its opposite, femininity. It is not an individual characteristic, but rather a societal one that relates to the distribution of values between the genders, which can be defined as another fundamental problem for any society (2011). The fifth concept mentioned by him is ‘long-term vs. short-term orientation’ which refers to how culture oriented their aims depend on time (Hofstede, 2011) and they divide country and culture depending on their orientation. Final concept mentioned by Hofstede is ‘indulgence versus restraint’. Hofstede points out that ‘indulgence versus restraint’ is complementary to Long versus Short-Term Orientation. In fact, ‘indulgence versus restraint’ is weakly negatively correlated with 'long-versus short-term orientation’ (Hofstede, 2011).

3.3.2 History & Definitions

In the organizational culture literature, there are different definitions and perspectives on organizational culture and its functioning. Organizational culture as a term itself has been firstly defined in the related literature in the
1950s (Carvalho et. al., 2017). However, organizational culture as a concept was not widely introduced in the relevant literature on business organizations until the early 1980s (Carvalho et. al., 2017). According to Younis Abu-Jarad, Yusof and Nikbi (2010), the formal writing about organizational culture began with Pettigrew in 1979. Pettigrew (1979) defines anthropological concepts like “symbolism, myths,” and “rituals” which can be used in organizational context and analysis. Linnenluecke & Griffiths (2010), mentioned in their paper that the organizational culture as a concept was first found in 1970s and 1980s (e.g., Hofstede, 1981; Ouchi & Price, 1993; Pettigrew, 1979; Schwartz & Davis, 1981) and then it becomes not only one of the most important phenomena of the context, but also one of the most discussable terms in related literature of management field research and practice (e.g., Crane, 1995; Jarnagin & Slocum, 2007). According to Watkins (2013), although there is universal agreement that organizational culture exists, and that it has a critical influence on organizational behavior, there is no common consensus on how organizational culture is defined. Sun (2009) points out a similar view about organizational culture’s, stating that there are many definitions about organizational culture in the literature that define it in many ways. According to Carvalho et. al. (2017), “organizational culture is considered as one of the most important critical success factors for the implementation and success of quality improvement programs” (p.8). Scholars point out in their study that organizational culture is generally defined as a complex set of shared values, assumptions, and beliefs symbols that can be observed in norms and behaviors of an organization that an organization and its members have (Carvalho et. al., 2017). Trice & Beyer (1993) point out that culture itself is an ideology of the organization which includes beliefs, values, and norms and Wilkins & Ouchi (1983) claims that it lays on a set of shared assumptions, philosophies, expectations, values, attitudes, and norms (cited in Carvalho et. al., 2017). Some researchers (e.g., Barney, 1986; Tsui et al., 2006; van Riel & Fombrun, 2009) suggest that such shared values have an impact on the behaviors of
organization’s employees, which are critical to organizational effectiveness (cited in Meng & Berger, 2019).

**Building and Benefits**

The ability of understanding work within a culture is so vital and it is a requirement for effective leadership (Hennessey 1998, cited in Ogbonna & Harris, 2000). Ogbonna & Harris (2000) point out in their same research that the founders/chairs of organizations create and shape the culture of their organization, and Schein (1984) claims that commonly shared behaviors are generally transmitted from one generation to the next generation in the organization. Organizational culture emerged as a necessity to increase engagement and performance of staff (Meng & Berger, 2019). There is another perspective about organizational culture mission and itself, as Siehl (1985) states in his study that ‘organizations do not have cultures, they are cultures, and therefore culture is so difficult to change’ (cited in Ogbonna, 1992:125).

In the Siehl perspective, an important point is to perceive the organizational culture within the organization itself. Kawiani et al. (2018) claims that organizational culture can affect employees work performance, their commitment to the organization, and also their satisfaction, while some other scholars point out that the culture of organization influences employees’ motivation for change (cited in Lingmont and A. Alexiou, 2020).

Reeves and Bednar (1994) claim that managing organizational culture is so important since it directly affects employees’ perceptions of their work, and additionally to them, some other scholars defined organization culture as a set of shared norms, rules and expectations which guide the common thinking and behaviors of organization’s members (cited in Carvalho et. al., 2017).

According to Astawa, and Sukawati (2018), organizational culture is influenced by local culture directly and Astawa, Susyarini and Triyuni (2016) indicate that local culture (harmonious culture) feeds the organizational
culture and additionally have vital impacts on empowering the relationship between financial performance and ownership of staffs.

Yaghi (2007) mentions that organizational culture is one of the determinant factors on decision-making. Therefore, understanding organization culture theory is important for this research since it affects decision-making which is one of the vital concepts of the research.

### 3.3.3 Local Culture

Some other sources define local culture as culture belonging to a group of people in a particular place who define themselves as a community, generally sharing the same experiences, characteristics, customs, and trying to protect the values to distinguish themselves from others (Quia, no date). Local culture can refer to many things for some populations, since some define it as it refers to most of the things created and shared by society as a part of their overall life in that certain place (WTLC, 2020). Fredin and Jogmark (2017) argue that local culture consists of some assumptions of society which are shared by the population in that certain location. Schein (1984) claims that these unconscious assumptions have an impact on how the majority of the population make their decisions and also behaves. Brata’s (2016) definition about local culture is to interpret it as a human and community policy which depends on some certain values, ethics, philosophy, and attitudes, additionally it is an institutional behavior to manage traditionally different natural resources and/or human resources (cited in Bagus, Brahma Sari and Suryani, 2020). In his same research, Brata (2016) mentioned that there are some qualities of local culture that can be listed as follows: 1- the ability to survive when facing another culture, 2- being able to integrate elements of outside culture into own native culture, 3- the ability to absorb different elements of outside culture, and 4- the ability to exercise control and give direction to cultural development.
Contextualization

According to Suh (2020) the word ‘contextualization’ was first introduced at the by Shoki Coe in the early 1970s. Contextualization is a term generally used by scholars for religious context in the related literature (e.g. Park, 2017; Adeleru, 1999; Wu, 2019; Maggay, 2013; Elm (Pseudonym) & Elm, 2020; Evangelos, 2020, cited in Matthew, 2020). Matthew (2020) claims that contextualization is a vital topic in the field of missiology. There are a number of different theologians who define various perspectives on contextualization (Suh, 2020). Although contextualization has been widely used for the theology context, when Ott’s (2014) definition is paid attention, it is seen that it is a term which can be used in different contexts. Ott (2014) defined contextualization as the elimination of external influences and values of a certain context, while it is needed for application to local situations. Lingenfelter (1998) defines contextualization as framing content in an appropriate and more meaningful form for local culture to be applicable in one of certain cultures. Auer (1996) describes contextualization as it refers to the context that is not pregiven and that is happening with joint efforts. In the same research, Auer describes it as a cognitive model that refers to interaction of needs of a certain area and supply with a converted solution. Charles (2005) claims that the key aspect of contextualization refers to reshaping the content for appropriate context-specific (cited in Hong, 2016) which makes it more suitable and easier to achieve the main purpose under the specific cultural conditions. Environmental conditions can force organizations to develop a capacity and infrastructure which causes adaptation to the needs of conditions (Costanza et al. 2015).

Cultural Mediation

According to Kosiyaporn et al., (2020) cultural mediation is about finding common ways, like a bridge, of thinking and nonverbal communication
between both sides that form the conflict and giving both sides a deeper insight into each other’s cultures in order to build mutual understanding. Scholars use different terms such as ‘cultural intermediaries’, ‘middleman minorities’ and ‘cultural brokers’ when examining the experiences of groups who conduct and participate in interregional exchange and attempt to mediate cultural differences when it is necessary (Tong, 2020). However, the literature of cultural mediation, mediated cultures are often defined as ‘internally homogenous and externally distinctive and bounded objects’ (Wolf 1982, 6, cited in Rothman, 2010:74). Cultural differences are not predetermined, but are improved through ‘an ongoing process of boundary maintenance that unfolds in specific sites and institutions, through the efforts of precisely those who purport to mediate and bridge them’ (Tong, 2020, p.3). Salmon etc. al. (2013) defines mediation as a process of conflict management.

**Localization**

Wong & Law (1999) argue that expatriate organization staff may not understand the local culture and Graham, Bradshaw and Trew (2009) point out that practitioners must be aware of cultural understanding in their work. Here, localization refers to creating a capacity with local sources to deal with local cultural codes. In addition, Wall (1990) argues in his study that local employees generally have more connections in their local environment, making it easier for them to build relationships with beneficiaries. It is pointed out that the majority of agencies and practitioners generally seek to include cultural awareness and sensitivity in all aspects of social service they provide (Graham, Bradshaw and Trew, 2009).

According to He & Hong (2012), it is important and necessary for transnational organizations to have localized human resources and employees. There are a few reasons for this; the first is that localizing human resources decreases expensive costs in the process of cultural adaptation, which involves both communication with locals and eliminating the high costs. The second is that
local staff are generally more willing and can easily communicate well with local people to establish an appropriate process (Qi, 2013). In the same study, Qi argues that another benefit of localization is to maintain management and staff sustainability, which reduces circulation of staff and strengthens links between agency staff and beneficiaries’ Staff and beneficiaries. Qi (2013) argues that relationships exist between trust and level of staff localization in relation to beneficiaries’ view positively. Some scholars point out that local staff are generally better and valuable resources for getting access to local context and people, and also for building stronger local networks than foreigner staff (Qi, 2013).

If the positions of foreigner staff in the organization are replaced by local employees, it can bring about much better cooperation and communication with the locals since there is a similar behavioral framework with locals (Qi, 2013).
3.4 Summary of Theoretical Framework

All three concepts; decision-making, crisis management, and local culture, that mentioned in the research question are defined by scholars in many different ways and views. When ‘crises management’ is searched on Linnaeus University database, more than 25,000 results are found. The research result number is more than 700,000 for ‘decision making’ and the number is more than 8000 for ‘local culture’. Even though the numbers may not give a clear picture about the research, they can give an idea of how much attention is being paid to concepts and how much research has been done on these concepts. Even though crises are divided into some subtitles by some scholars (e.g., Pecujlija and Cosic, 2019), crises are defined by Boin (2013) as falling out of routine of life, occurring suddenly, and threatening people’s prevailing values and functions, while Hannes and Alvintzi, (2010) define them as abnormal events that brings about dramatic consequences to the society. Another concept addressed in this research is decision-making, which is also discussed in different ways and perspectives (e.g., Hansson, 1994; Marchisotti and Almeida, 2018; Lee and Stinson, 2014). The final concept that is the subject of research is local culture, which is defined as culture that belongs to a group of people in a certain and limited place where the population generally share the same experiences, characteristics, and customs (Quia, no date).

Several studies investigate the relationship between crisis situations and decision making (e.g., Bruce Ho et al., 2010; Sayegh, Anthony and Perrewé, 2004; Rosenthal and Kouzmin, 1993). A Common idea in these researches is that the decision making in crises is not the same as in a non-crisis due to the demands of the conditions. The above scholars reveal valuable results in terms of relationship between decision-making and crises which make it valuable to investigate more. In addition, there are some researches which reveal the relationship between culture and decision-making. Nutt (1988) points out that culture has an important impact on decision-making and is a dominant
explanatory variable when it comes to decision-making, although its effects on decision-making vary by culture. Reviewing related literature such as the example above, one can see that there is a vital relationship between culture and decision-making (e.g., Yates and de Oliveira, 2016), and also between decision-making and crisis management (e.g., Van Borkulo et al., 2005). Even though there are some researchers who investigate the relationship between any two of those concepts as above examples, there are limited researches that investigate the relationship between those three concepts. Therefore, this research aims to fit the gap in the related literature and reveal the relationship among those concepts.
4 Empirical Data Review

This chapter provides the collected data from the interviews. The collected data is presented as a narrative story with the focus on three concepts: Crisis Management, Decision-Making, and Local Culture.

4.1 Crisis Management

Participants give various responses about their organizations’ crisis management. Some of the organizations have centralized their crisis management, while others have situation-based crisis management. Some follow static protocols, while others have more freedom in their crisis management:

Asif argues that when it comes to crises, decisions have to be made very quickly since lives matter and says that “When it comes to crisis, you have to make more prompt decisions and again align objectives, decide what is needed first. Needs should be based on affected population needs”. (Asif, 2021). Although they have experiences in both organizational and personal decisions, it is still difficult to make decisions in crisis and be prepared for responding to crises since many factors must be considered and the necessary scope of plans must be estimated. “We are preparing a plan in the field based on the needs of the affected population, then headquarters supports. We have experiences about disasters. It is hard to prepare. We have certain contingency plans for crises that are so differ whether it is refugees or earthquakes, or floods. People need basic water, sanitation and protection which is very important.” (Asif, 2021). However, like any project or activity, they also conduct an after-the-fact evaluation of their response to measure their effectiveness and determine missing parts in response and project and the after-the-fact evaluation is conducted in different ways.” In any Project cycle management, you have conceptualization of your program, you design your
program, then you monitor your program. When you design your programs, you have to have your outcomes, your outputs, and indicators. Evaluator should be aware of the context at a certain point and time. It should be done on a very consultative basis. When you do your plan, your plan is based on local population needs, you just put them down, what is your indicator for success is you put in order, all the evaluation should come from assessment then your success is based on field assessment” (Asif, 2021).

Ricardo’s organization is constantly responding to crises. “We are a crisis driven organization, we have big collections of tools to be able to react quickly and respond to crises”. (Ricardo, 2021) In Ricardo’s organization, they have a crisis management protocol to follow in crisis situations. “We have a critical incident management protocol on how to manage concrete acute incidences by following the protocol” (Ricardo, 2021). When asked how to respond to an unprepared crisis, he implies that it is the manager’s responsibility to evaluate the situation and to make the right decision at the right time. “The wisdom is to know which problem I can solve and which one I cannot solve and this is the key in crises, to use the guts and the experience to make quick decisions” (Ricardo, 2021). The organization’s preparedness for crisis is based on the fact that the crisis team must be prepared for potential crises and also fulfill its responsibility during crises. “During the crises they go and assess the need, initial actions etc., people and equipment that can be immediately deployed in emergencies”. (Ricardo, 2021). The organization also prepared itself through agreements with other organizations that are specialized in certain things to respond to crises “We also have prepared procedures, prepared funds, pre-agreed policies and corporations’ agreements”. (Ricardo, 2021).

Ahmad has a long experience dealing with crises. He mentions that his entire professional life was based on dealing with crises including earthquakes, floods, and migration. He argues that in all kinds of crises, we have to first provide basic needs and ensure that life is secure. As he experiences many
crises and crisis management, he mentioned that in crisis situations, they have to deal with many different topics. “We deal with government entities, we deal with donors, and we deal with beneficiaries” (Ahmad, 2021). Ahmad’s organization is better prepared for any kind of crises, since it has many years of experiences with crises. Ahmad mentions that his organization has a department of emergencies and operations in headquarters to care for any sudden crises and support regional office country offices where crises occur.

Michael’s organization has created a crisis management team which consists of: field security officer, regional security officer, the head of sub office and hub manager, depending on what the situation is, to provide the information and the ideas to make the decision. However, the key value for the organization in crises is to respond quickly, effectively and agility in these crises' situations, which are common in the context where the organization operates, decisions are made with less debates and fewer conversations. Action should be taken very quickly to save as many lives and properties as possible and also to protect the organization's reputation, other than that under crisis is debatable. “To make the decision as quickly as possible with the best information to save lives as much as possible, to reduce the risk and exposure of the people, and to reduce the risk and the reputation of the organization and the rest of that can be debated”. (Michael, 2021). Michael means that the more the decisions are long term, the more they are debatable and vice versa. Moreover, Michael’s organization prepares itself to respond to crises with identified tasks among people who are in charge; for example, the equipment officer and the finance officer, to ensure that everyone responds as a team “It is a clear line of responsibility, a clear line of deliverable, and accountability that is attached to that responsibility”. (Michael, 2021).

Peter follows the real time evaluation to see how the organization responds to the crisis. “Real time evaluation includes talking to beneficiaries as well as partners”. (Peter, 2021).
Samer collaborates with other organizations and local red crescent, which makes his works easy to communicate with local people and identify their needs. “I am collaborating with the country's red crescent and it is an advantage” and “I am doing crisis management with local sources (organization, partners) which make it easier, and I don’t have any other option. I believe this is the best way.” (Samer, 2021). Moreover, Samer mentions that there is an umbrella organization for all red cross/crescent, the IFRC, which conducts analysis for crises preparedness and informs all partners to prepare for certain needs. In Samer’s organization, the main player in decision-making is the government's strict rules. Therefore, Samer wishes that the organization is more flexible or at least plans more for different crisis scenarios that might occur during their work. “I wish to do that in a more planned way. This is a humanitarian operation. Things may come daily, urgently. If something new comes, it takes time to get permission and make decisions”. (Samer, 2021).

Lucy points out that they have different types of crises in their work. The most important one for them is the security crisis management for some areas of the organization. The organization has a crisis management team at their headquarters. When a crisis occurs, they inform headquarters and wait for guidelines for actions to be made towards the crisis. However, she says while they are well prepared for war, or any other healthy crisis, sometimes unexpected crises occur, and it can be difficult to manage it. “We were well prepared for a war crisis or a social crisis, but not prepared for a public health crisis.” (Lucy, 2021). Lucy argues that the culture of people affects their response to the crisis. The local cultural values consist of many responsibilities such as family members’ cares and protections. “As managers generally we don’t hear about it and they don’t tell us but those problems influence the capacity of work and capacity to act quickly to be available in crises. Sometimes, in a crisis situation they don’t listen to orders and issues but when we look at a deeper level, we realize that they have taken care of their family
and many other issues.” (Lucy, 2021). She also points out that when a crisis suddenly occurs, it is not easy to take every detail into consideration, because it is not possible to pay attention to everything in a limited time. Even if you spend time taking everything into consideration, you may lose people or have huge problems to deal with. Therefore, it must go as quickly as possible and then pay attention to other details. “When crises happen, as managers we focus on what you have to do and you cannot take on too many things right or left, but at the end if you know a certain issue, crisis management is better. In crisis management, often you do not look at them (cultural values), but if it comes to being a good team and taking care of everybody, I think you should know about those cultural aspects. Otherwise, you risk losing people.” (Lucy, 2021).

4.2 Decision-Making

The participants present a wide range of how decisions are made in their organizations, from deliberative and consensus decisions to bureaucratized ones:

Asif makes strategic decisions (on an annual basis) as well as decisions on a daily basis. The decisions he makes are aimed at achieving the objectives of each project and program. However, these objectives are not only decided by him, but also by partners who are familiar with local culture and take culture into consideration. In that sense, he mentions that their decision-making style in the organization is not always in dictation and orders. Decisions tend to be made by consensus. Although there are procedures for some issues, they are aware of their own limitations. “There are certain procedures to follow. I know where I can sign off, I know where I cannot sign off. I consult with the line manager for sensitive issues (before acting against violation codes of conduct). It is not dictation; it is a consultation. For example, when I deal with high government issues, I consult my line manager. I do that with my team as
Consensus is very important when you are dealing with a community. Especially when we do not know and are not familiar with the issue.” (Asif, 2021).

Ricardo describes his organization as an organization of bureaucracy, meaning there are usually a number of decision makers involved in the decision-making process, which makes the process a bit slow. “There are checks and balances in almost every process that we do” (Ricardo 2021). He also explains the obstacles that any experienced manager usually might face when working in such organizations, he attributes all of this to the bureaucratic aspects in the organization. “People make decisions in two ways, intuitively (usually with things you are used to) and thoroughly (when you have to think and analyze), sometimes I can make complicated decision intuitively because of my long experience, however, because the organization is bureaucratic, I can’t, I have to go through long process where I have to convince others”, ” I think decision-making should be more decentralized”. (Ricardo, 2021). With Richardo, all the organizational decisions are formalized and structured by certain processes; however, he names what he calls decisions on programmatic aspects and says that these decisions are not formalized and that he has more space to make them. “Probably the decisions on the programmatic aspects in which we have more space in them, for example, a decision to decide whether we do a focus group to understand the needs of the beneficiaries” (Ricardo, 2021).

Ahmad is responsible for the daily and administrative decisions of the organization in the country and for him the ideal decision-making is to be beneficials to everyone who is affected by the decision. “An Ideal decision for me is a benefit for everyone. It should be a win-win situation for all parties because when we are dealing with our work, we are dealing with different levels. You have organizational interest, you have government and member state interest, you have beneficiaries you are serving. Any decision should be
addressing the needs of all parts and it should be done in a very smooth way to reach certain goals. If it is done like that, I do believe that it is ideal decision making.” (Ahmad, 2021). Ahmad believes that decision-making culture in his organization is more likely to be value-based decisions and that there are some certain ways of making decisions depending on the topic. When decisions have to be made, principles and values of the organization have to be taken into consideration, which are a kind of guideline for them to make decisions. Ahmad also mentioned that the needs of people whom the organization is serving are another important factor which affects its decision-making. He believes that decision-making should be in a consensus.” Decisions should be collaborative ones” (Ahmad, 2021). Although Ahmad is happy about the decision-making culture and organizational culture they have, he still thinks that sometimes the decision-making is not ideal for him because when it comes to making decisions about a policy, he and his team are not decision makers. He mentioned that they have to respect the sovereignty of countries where they are living, so final decisions are made by the government.

Michael’s organization is operating in a very hot area, so when it comes to crises, he must make clear decisions with the best available information “I cannot wait until I have all information, I have to make the decision, with the best interest of people involved, the best interest of the organization, and with the best of information that I have, this is our management style” (Michael, 2021). Michael’s approach to decision-making is what he calls deliberative decision-making, where he discusses strategic decisions with his team so they can decide and agree on a decision “I discuss with the senior manager team about where to go with our organization and then we decide together”. (Michael, 2021). Michael has the flexibility to make decisions. “At the mission level, I am ultimately responsible for all decisions”. (Michael, 2021). However, the direction of each mission should be set by headquarters, the regional office, and from the country team. “Everything that I do has to fit the organization's general interest” (Michael, 2021). Decisions in Michael’s
organization about what to do are formal and should be reported to the upper managerial level, however, informal decisions are more related to how he executes the work on the ground. Michael believes the ideal decision-making culture is to make the decision together with the group, asking them questions and making them participate in the decision-making process. “I first distribute questions to the team to discuss during the meeting, because when you ask questions to people about their opinion on certain things, then people will be participating, and I would always begin with the lowest rate person in the meeting, by this way I assure that no one in the room is going to be intimidated by my opinion during the meeting”. (Michael, 2021). In that sense, Michael creates a kind of participative decision-making in the organization by engaging all team members in collaborative conversations. “Now we are so open that everybody’s opinion is valued”. (Michael, 2021). Moreover, Michael evaluates his decisions that are made under crises by using a diagnostic approach. The aim is to do no harm as possible as it could, and the input has to achieve the maximum result possible. “Diagnostic of the decision is the best way to see the impact, how was the reaction, how fast I reacted, and how to make it better next time”. (Michael, 2021).

In Peter’s organization, there are two levels of decisions: operational decisions, which are daily based decisions, and strategic decisions, which must be made at the regional level. “Our decision-making is around security management, and there are two level of decisions in our organization, one is operational which are taken on a daily basis, for example, what we should do and what we should not do, and the other level is strategic, for example, about infrastructure needed for security in Afghanistan, or about suspending activities because of the security environment, and these strategic ones are taken on a regional level” (Peter, 2021). Moreover, decisions in Peter’s organization are authority-based, however, the more the decision is reaching the regional level, the more discussion is needed and consensus on certain things is needed as well. “Process usually includes discussions that explore
the problem and the different options and then a decision is made by the people who are authorized for it”, “I can make the decision that is under my area and authority and communicate it, and our team is expected to support that decision”, “decisions that we need to make together is in a management team include decisions which we discussed in our regional office to do with adopting a strategy” (Peter, 2021). All decisions in Peter’s organization are formal and justifications are always needed for decisions “I struggle to think of decisions that you have to take when it comes to money for example, I sometimes need some consulting to be able to justify my decision” (Peter, 2021). However, when a decision deals with sensitive issues, especially when there are risks and uncertainties, formal decisions also have to be made with personal responsibility

Samer is working in one of the intensive fields, and everyday there are many things to do. He is managing those daily administrative issues. In the country, Samer argues, the government manages the field of their work and decisions are generally discussed in an intersectional coordination group. Strategies of the organization are discussed in the coordination cluster group and joint decisions are made for the field, which are then implemented by the partners.

“There is an intersectional coordination group. All clusters are under this intersectional, and all coordination, strategies are decided there. Whatever you are doing should fit their strategies. We are also as red cross and crescent discuss the issue among us. You have to consider all those groups. Sometimes I need to inform my managers. It changes” (Samer, 2021).

Lucy mentions that in her organization they have a certain circle for their annual decision-making and strategies. The objectives of the organization are discussed at the beginning of the year and she is responsible to manage whether they are going in the correct direction or not. Lucy claims that there used to be a top-down decision-making style in the organization, but in recent years, the organization has begun to be more participatory. “Developing
organization strategy in a participatory manner”. (Lucy, 2021). She claims that the staff are happier when the decisions are made in a more participatory manner. Her organization has different principles which they “call cooperate in diversity, and co create meaning.” (Lucy, 2021).

4.3 Local Culture

Participants of the research share significant information about the impact of local culture on their decision-making. All participants reveal a close perspective about the nature of local culture. In addition, the participants mention different approaches to deal with local difficulties like localization, contextualization.

Asif argues that when it comes to the effectiveness of culture in their work, they have to take culture into consideration in a strict way and that local culture affects all their processes directly. “Whenever you serve, you have to look at the local community first, we have to look at the values. Without discrimination, not taking side. We should get local resources. When there is conflict between modern world values and locality, we have to respect local government laws and try to communicate with local governments. Even if their local values are against our own morals, we must respect their beliefs. We are guided by national authority. It is our job to help them to advocate to the authority or the community when something is not right” (Asif, 2021).

Ahmad also mentions the same direction about impact of local culture. He believes that the values of the affected population influence many decisions while managing crises, including how camps are set up, what kind of aid is used, and what kind of action is taken. “Culture plays a very important role in our decisions especially when we talk about collaboration and inclusion of the people, all these things need to be taken into consideration”. Ahmad believes that local culture should be part of the response, that the local culture is the
basis of decision-making in crisis management. “You cannot do anything without taking local culture into consideration”. “Local cultural setting is one of the pillars when we do any kind of support when we should keep in mind any crisis management” (Ahmad, 2021).

Another participant, Samer, points out that local culture values and conservativeness affect their recruitment process and decision-making of HR as well. “We have female doctors in all teams. If you don’t have a female, you cannot do that. We must take cultural values and beliefs into consideration even when we are recruiting staff”. (Samer, 2021).

Lucy also shares her knowledge about local culture and decision-making. She believes that local culture strongly influences their decision-making, both in terms of formal (board) and informal (person’s responsibility) decisions. “We have to be tied to the local context. We have to discuss culture. We have people from different cultures. As an international organization, we have to understand local culture and act in order not to disrespect local culture.” (Lucy, 2021). Lucy believes that the cultural aspects or the local context have a direct impact, and she thinks that the act of adapting is similar to swimming in a lake. “I guess if you are in local culture or local context, it is like you are in a lake and swimming and obviously you adapt to the water that you are swimming in and if it is tough water then you need to swim differently, if it is soft then you lie on your back and look at the sky. Yes, obviously local culture is the context in which we move, and this is why I realized I have more knowledge on one culture and less on another culture.” (Lucy, 2021).

Another participant, Ricardo, also mentions that the organization does not have to worry about the cultural aspect while acting in crises since they are in constant connection with the local community to tell them what is acceptable and what is not regarding local culture aspects. “To adapt to local cultural aspects in crises we connect with local relief organizations, I mean the national society which they know best about, what is right or wrong, we always
have to be operated as a local actor”. (Ricardo, 2021). However, some value-related issues are always on the table to negotiate with the community “With some aspects, for example, women’s rights, we have to push the local society to work with”. (Ricardo, 2021).

However, Peter has some worries about some side effects to local culture as when people in Afghanistan might hesitate to make important decisions due to some cultural concerns “I think that they need quite a bit of a backup for the decision they need to be supported through making difficult decisions especially when decisions they have to make might cause social conflicts”. (Peter, 2021). Another aspect of the local culture connects to gender separations. “For example, if you want to reach women beneficiaries, then you have to have women staff to be able to reach women, so I think that’s part of the culture which we always consider in our decision making”. (Peter, 2021).

Michael believes that it is important to always take the local culture into consideration in decision-making. “I am always mindful of the local culture and always think about how my decisions are going to affect people. It is important to follow the protocol, what we have to follow, and how we do it. The context in this country is like a melting pot, you have lots of cultures to take into consideration, so understanding every culture is the key to take it into the considerations of a decision”. (Michael, 2021). Michael emphasizes the importance to understand the cultural aspects of the context and always respect and adapt to the local culture. “Having a variety of cultural understanding is important when you make decisions in such an environment to modify your decision making to fit to that culture”. (Michael, 2021). Michael also says that he is against any kind of imposing act on any culture. “It is a back-channel diplomacy to make suggestions about what is best for the society because any act of imposing on the culture will certainly lead to making backfires”. (Michael, 2021).
However, when it comes to cultural conflict between organizational values and local cultural values, like child marriage for example, Ahmad argues that they have to respect law of country. “You will need to present what international law is saying and you need to see what local law is saying and you need to know what beneficiaries are saying” (Ahmad, 2021). He believes that the only way to deal with cultural conflict is cultural mediation, which is necessary to take all aspects and factors into consideration. “That is why every time we are talking about cultural mediation” (Ahmad, 2021). In addition, Ahmad also mentions the concept of contextualization in crisis management actions. “One thing we focus on in crisis management, contextualizing response, for instance, we take the consideration of ‘do no harm’ principles and the cultural beliefs of people”. Whereas Asif demonstrates it with a different example “When earthquake happened in Pakistan, there were many people want to help, a lot of people donated clothes, but the clothes were western clothes but in Pakistan people do not wear western clothes. If you give clothes, you need to know what clothes to give. You need to know culture and act with it in crises” (Asif, 2021).

Moreover, Peter mentions that some organizational values might contradict with the local culture. “For example, when it comes to child marriage, our organizational values are not non-negotiable so if you want our service you have to raise your standards”. (Peter, 2021).

Lucy also argues that one of the difficulties for her is the conflict between the organizational policy and local cultural norms. In the organization, there is zero tolerance to care weapons, but it is normal in the local culture, and she has difficulties sometimes dealing with them. She claims that they generally adapt to the culture and cultural codes. “With African presidents, generally we can talk about child marriage or women rights, but we cannot talk about LGBT with many colleagues from African union. I think that narratively our organization adapts to the culture.” (Lucy, 2021).
Asif expresses that there are many challenges in his work. He believes that those challenges are inevitable but they are not something bad since they make us grow. He mentions that the main point is not about challenges, it is about how you perceive them and say “Challenges are everywhere, challenges with understanding each other, challenges with culture, challenges with particular context, challenges with politics but we are nonpolitical” (Asif, 2021). “When there is conflict between modern world values and local ones, we have to respect local government laws and try to communicate with local government. Even if their local values are against our own morals, we must respect their beliefs.” (Asif, 2021).

Samer also points out that to deal with local cultural effects, they localize their staff and recruit staff from the local community. “If I go to a shelter and walk there, people will be uncomfortable, but when local workers go there, since they know each other's culture, it makes things easier for both sides.” (Samer, 2021). In addition, in a similar way to Samer, Asif argues that they take advantage of local resources. “We are also strengthening our national red crosses to work what we called capacity building, national society development. Preparedness for next crises, developing community resilience, and health work.” (Asif, 2021). Ahmad also points out a similar way about working with local sources “Provide capacity building and technical support and its organization aims to support member states and support beneficiaries” (Ahmad, 2021). Lucy also reveals a similar perspective about local resources, “It is more aiming to societal contribution perspective. There are more equality and value-based culture and cultural diversity issues. It is more focusing on putting women into staff and leadership positions.” (Lucy, 2021).
5 Discussion

In this chapter, the empirical data are analyzed, and the findings are presented by answering the research questions.

5.1 Empirical Data Analysis

The concepts that emerged from the interviews are categorized into two main categories; Decision-Making in Crisis Management and Local Culture in Crisis Decision-Making.

5.1.1 Decision-Making in Crisis Management

The first category to discuss is the agility of the organization in managing crises, in that sense, the mechanism of decision-making including organizational decision-making and crisis decision making are discussed, and also the preference of decentralizing decision-making against centralizing decisions including the centralized crisis response are discussed as well.

5.1.1.1 Mechanism of Decision-Making

The mechanism of decision-making at the majority of the participants is related to the nature of the decision, that is, the more the decision is strategic or aiming at long-term results, the more it is structured and controlled. These types of decisions are generally referred to as formal decisions and are pervasive in big organizations and boards, where rules and regulations are supposed to help the organization to make effective decisions, however, when decisions are more integrated with the behaviors and attitudes of decision makers, then decisions are considered informal (Maharaj, 2009). Michael referred to formal decisions as the What decisions, whereas the informal decisions are more related to the How decisions. Peter defined formal decisions as those decisions in which justification is always needed with every
decision. And informal decisions as those are made with risk responsibility of the decision maker.

**Organizational Decision-Making**

Ahmad mentioned that the organizational policy is interrelated with the policy of the government and determined by governmental structures. This can be seen as one of the characteristics of organizational decision-making where a sense of relationship between making decisions and some power and agenda setting might be (Zur, 1997). However, the process of making decisions in most cases has the form of collaboration. Asif mentioned that decisions are generally made with consensus and consultative evaluations. Ahmad talked about collaborative decision-making at the operational level. In Michael’s organization, decision-making is deliberative, participative, and collaborative at all levels, and the process is flexible at the mission level. Decisions in Peter’s organization are authority-based but they are made collaboratively, especially at the operational level. Lucy has both top-down and participatory. The exceptions happen with Ricardo’s organization where decision-making processes are bureaucratized, and also with Samer’s organization, where decision-making is coordinated and controlled by strict rules, and decisions are often coming from the upper governmental level. However, taking the consideration of the organizational crisis management perspective, information processing is limited among people during crisis (Pecujlija and Cosic, 2019), therefore, collaboration in organizational decision-making is vital as it gives access to essential knowledge by making room for decision makers to share their information and knowledge while they collaborate on the decisions being made (Mckenzie, Winkelen and Grewal, 2011).

**Crisis Decision-Making**

The main characteristic of any decision in crisis situations is that the decision has to have the ability of crisis control and avoidance mechanisms, and this is to be done by ensuring that the right person is in the right position and place
at the right time (Bruce Ho et al., 2010). Most participants mentioned that decisions under crisis situations are made with the best available information that are provided by crisis management teams or departments. However, the mechanism of making decisions in crises is to act fast depending on available information. That is seen in Asif, Michael, and Lucy’s cases but has not been focused on in the rest of the cases. This variation could be related to the nature of the crisis that each case is used to have. Indeed, the type-based categories of crises that are mentioned in the previous chapter (see 3.1.1) shows how the way of response to a crisis (including the speed) can vary from type to type (Pecujlija and Cosic, 2019).

5.1.1.2 Centralization vs Decentralization

One of the major issues that came out during interviews with most of the participants was centralization. For example, Ricardo referred to a highly structured decision-making process when it comes to formalizing these processes. Ricardo means that the central government, with its full control of the processes, has bureaucratized these processes, which, in turn, affects the speed of making decisions. Centralization of decision-making will eventually lead to excessive bureaucracy as it is restricting employee’s participation (Yang, Zhou and Zhang, 2015), and seeing that decisions under crisis should be made quickly (Pearson and Clair, 1998), therefore, decentralization is a necessity so that decision makers can intervene in the right place at the right time (Pecujlija and Cosic, 2019). Participants who mentioned centralization are obviously aware that it is the root cause for sometimes non-flexible crisis response, as Ricardo suggested that decentralization is the solution to reach effectiveness. Samer talked about the strict rules that the organizational culture has which leads to a non-agile decision-making process. Peter mentioned bureaucratic actions and referred to some conditions of indecisiveness inside the organization since it is a large organization and decisions sometimes take a long time to be made, this could be considered as an implicit implication that
centralizing decision-making could be the problem. Ahmad talked about centralized crisis preparedness and Lucy mentioned that the main player in organizational crisis management is the centralized crisis management team. However, crisis anticipation and preparedness does not mean that decision makers will make decisions with certainly known outcomes (Evans and James, 1994). Nevertheless, as Ahmad referred to bureaucracy as the biggest challenge to effective decision-making, and based on the fact that he is not a policy maker since it is government structured, decentralization is the key for more administrative efficiency and to act beyond the control of policy makers (Kayuni and Tambulasi, 2011). Furthermore, the bureaucratic organizational culture in Ricardo’s organization made the organization rule-based instead of performance-based. People only care about rules. Decentralization is the key to act beyond the rules as it will release the energy to have quick reactions, improve effectiveness and morals (Evans and James, 1994). However, going with decentralization is not a guarantee that the organization will have better crisis management and it is the solution to overcome any crisis, but it is safe to assume that decentralization will serve as a leverage to formulate the solution (Zaharia, 2012).

**Centralized Crisis Response**

Centralized crisis preparedness is repeatedly presented in participants’ responses. Sometimes it is mentioned implicitly, like in Asif’s case as he explained that the organization is using prepared contingency plans as guidelines in crisis situations, however, by this method, there is more space for decision makers to have increased flexibility as the organizational culture is based on consensuses and consultation, and their evaluation for decision-making is based on the context at a specific point and a specific time. In Ricardo’s case, the organization is following a protocol which is centralized even when the evaluation is situation-based. In Ahmad, Samer, and Lucy’s cases, crisis preparedness is centralized, however, Lucy has more freedom
making decisions in crises since her organization is more open to participatory decision-making. In Peter and Michael’s cases, the organization is letting authoritative decision-makers, who are located in the context of crises, take the risk and the responsibility to evaluate the situation based on best information provided from crisis management teams, and also make crisis decisions in a collaborative way. Indeed, the agility of an organization in crisis situations is determined by how much the decision process tends to be informal in crises (‘t Hart, Rosenthal and Kouzmin, 1993). And that is most noticed in Peter and Michael’s cases.

5.1.2 Effects of Local Culture on Decision-Making in Crises

In this category, the effects of local culture on decision-making in crises are discussed in two points; one is crisis preparedness, and second is crisis response. Crisis response is discussed under three subtitles which can be listed as contextualization, cultural mediation, and localization.

5.1.2.1 Crisis Preparedness

Crisis preparedness is the first phase in the standard version of the crisis management cycle (see figure 3). Crisis preparedness has been used widely among participants as a way of including the local cultural aspects into consideration in crises. Asif mentioned that his organization connects with the local government to find out which cultural aspects to take into consideration while they prepare their contingency plan. In Ricardo’s case, the organization prepares procedures, funds, agreements with external partners, and pre-agreed policies to understand the local community’s need, the organization creates connecting channels with local community parts, and shapes its preparedness to fit the local culture’s need. In Ahmad’s case, crisis preparedness is based on contextualization, inclusion of people, and maintaining social fabrics. In Michael’s case, the organization’s preparedness for crises goes with identified
tasks, that is, every member in the crisis management team is responsible for one task in crises, for example, equipment, finance, etc. This, indeed, goes in line with Aligne and Mattioli (2011) as crisis management should be done from different aspects (see 3.1.4). However, according to Michael, all tasks must align with the purpose of maintaining social cohesion. Both Peter and Lucy’s cases enact their crisis preparedness with crisis management teams and require pre-knowledge about the necessary aspects of the local culture. Samer described that his organization is an umbrella organization and that the organization operates the work with the help of local resources and that is what he called *localization*.

### 5.1.2.2 Crisis Response

It is noticed that all participants, with the exception in Samer’s case, have a margin of liberty on the operational level. Therefore, they can act based on their own evaluation of the situation, and enable some actions with their own risk responsibility. This is referred to as informal decisions, in this sense, it is also noticed that crisis response may include some local culture impacts, for example, in Michael’s case. Michael’s decision-making is both protocol-based and context-based. Michael named the context during crisis situations as a ‘*melting pot’*, where many cultures and subcultures are in the same place during the same period of time. Michael said he modifies his decisions in a cultural crisis so that they fit to it, and that he is constantly doing diagnostic-based evaluations to see the impact of his decisions and evaluate his performance. This, indeed, goes in line with Hart *et al.*, (1993) claim that there is distinction between strategic and operational levels in crisis response, and that the ‘*local presence*’ of decision makers at the operational level, will eventually lead to more successful crisis management since they are more connected to social and political circumstances of the area under the crisis. Therefore, in Michael’s case, he includes every detail about the local culture
in his decision-making so he can make the best decisions for the community with the best information possible to have the least adverse impact on people.

### 5.1.2.3 Contextualization

As it is well described in the theoretical framework (see 3.3.3), contextualization is a term that is generally used by scholars for religious context in related literature (e.g. Park, 2017; Adeleru, 1999; Wu, 2019; Maggay, 2013; Elm (Pseudonym) & Elm, 2020; Evangelos, 2020 cited in Matthew, 2020). Lingenfelter (1998) defines contextualization as framing the content into appropriate and meaningful shapes for local culture.

Although contextualization has been widely used for theology context, when the participants' responses of the research are reviewed, it can be clearly realized that contextualization is a matter of crisis management as well, especially while it is needed to interfere with crises under different cultural values.

Ahmad mentioned that it is a necessity to contextualize their works and intervention to the crisis context and culture of people who are affected by the crises. It seems that it is vital for organizations which interfere in crises to have to take the current context into consideration when they are making any formal or informal decisions. Asif and Ahmad explain the necessity of contextualization with principles and core values of humanitarianism. There are different principles of humanitarianism. One of the principles of humanitarianism is “do no harm” which refers to preventing beneficiaries and mitigating any negative impact of its actions on those populations who are affected by any crisis (UNHCR, 2015). Ahmad and Asif claim that if they do not contextualize their implementation and interfere with the crisis, they will harm beneficiaries which are against the main principles of humanitarian aid, “do no harm”. They believe that by not giving suitable aids in a suitable way of local culture, that means not contextualization, beneficiaries will be harmed, and you will not be able to eliminate crisis impacts. The example Ahmad gave
about westernized mental health services is also a necessity of “do no harm” which causes contextualization. Graham et. al. (2009) argues that all practitioners should be able to understand the client’s perspective on a given topic and should consider what will work best for them in regards to their current situation and cultural values. Ahmad argues that the westernized MHPSS model may not work in the Middle East and may harm beneficiaries.

In addition, the adaptation of context is necessary for organizational culture as well. Environmental conditions may force organizations to develop a capacity and infrastructure which brings about adaptation to the needs of conditions (Huber 2011; Levinson 1994; Pearce and Robbins 1993; Ployhart and Turner 2014; Trahms et al. 2013 cited in Costanza et. al. 2015). As it can be seen in Lucy’s experiences, organizations are adapting to their way of work, decision making process and organization culture. Lucy has to change some rules or adapt some of the organizational rules to local culture.

5.1.2.4 Cultural Mediation

Cultural mediation is one of the important concepts that was found in the research. According to Kosiyaporn (2020) cultural mediation is about finding common ways, a kind of bridge, of thinking and nonverbal communication between both sides and giving both a deeper insight into each other’s meanings and cultures in order to reinforce mutual understanding. Salmon etc. al. (2013) define mediation as a process of conflict management where sides cannot solve by themselves and accept help from third parties.

The participants mentioned that organizations are trying to deal with conflict organizational culture/values and local culture. Humanitarian organizations are trying to manage conflict between local cultural values (or culture of beneficiaries) and humanitarian values (e.g., child marriage issue).

To deal with conflict among cultures, culture mediation is found to be the most effective way by the majority of participants. Asif mentioned that when a
conflict occurs, firstly they have to respect the laws of the country and try not to take any side, and also try to find an acceptable way to deal with the issues. He also argues that consensus is very important to deal with an issue especially when you are in a different context. Ahmad argues that when they have cultural conflict, they are putting all aspects of culture, their core values and main point of conflict then they are trying to build cultural mediation. Some participants argue that cultural mediation or finding a negotiation is a necessity for organizations or any other humanitarian since they do not have any power to force people (and must not) do anything which is also against “do no harm” principles. When it comes to conflict and if the beneficiary is one part, organizations have to mediate. Otherwise, as they mentioned that in case, they impose anything to beneficiaries, it will be against humanitarian principle even if local cultural attitudes are against organization values or modern values.

5.1.2.5 Localization

Localization is another concept that emerged from data. Localization refers to replacing organization expatriate staff with local workers. Won and Kenneth (1999) argue that expatriate organization staff may not understand the local culture and Graham (2009) points out that practitioners must be careful to demonstrate and be aware of cultural understanding. Here localization refers to creating a capacity with local sources to be able to deal with local cultural codes. Samer has mentioned that working with local people makes their job easier, and also beneficiaries derive benefits more from local workers since they understand each other’s culture and relate better. As he illustrates in his example, when an expatriate goes to the field, beneficiaries do not feel comfortable which disturbs communication and makes it difficult to provide help to them. However, Samer adds that when local workers go to fields, it increases the effects and quality of services. In addition, Wall (1990) argues in his study that local employees generally have more connections in their local environment, and it is easier for them to build relationships with
beneficiaries. Asif also mentions that getting benefits of local resources is important for them and in each crisis, as organization policy they benefit from local sources.

Apart from locals, they are trying to be guided by national authority as well which is also one of the local sources for them. Samer mentions that apart from recruiting local people, they also have to be aware of the gender of workers as well since conservative females are not willing to get help from males. Haynes et al., (1997) and Weaver (2005) point out that the majority of agencies and practitioners generally intend to include cultural awareness and sensitivity in all aspects of social services they are providing (cited in Graham, 2009). Some of the women who are getting services can be more conservative than men and may not be as open with men around bringing about necessity to work with same-sex practitioners.

Some participants mentioned that getting help from local sources (human resources and information sources) in each step of intervention to the crisis have different positive impacts which can be listed as; taking fast decisions, preparing suitable materials, learning where help is needed, increasing productivity of implementation.
5.2 Discussion of Research Questions

5.2.1 Crisis Decisions

The purpose of this research was to find out how local culture affects the leaders’ decision-making process in crisis management that led to conceptualize the first research question:

*RQ1: How are Decisions made in Crises?*

The research found that most crisis decisions are preplanned, and that in most cases, decisions are formalized on how to respond to such predictable crises. However, among some respondents, it has been found that some cases have a margin of flexibility on how to make crisis decisions especially for those who are on the operational level. These cases are able to take personal risk responsibility to make informal decisions based on situation/context evaluations, without following the pre-designed protocols and routines and without making justifications since people on the operational level are in the front line in crises, and they also have the advantage of the ‘local presence’ (’t Hart, Rosenthal and Kouzmin, 1993), allowing them to be fast, accurate, and consistent when they make their crisis decisions (Coombs, 2007). An aftermath evaluation for crisis decisions in those cases is the way to measure the performance in making those informal decisions, and that is to better prepare for the next crisis (Coombs, 2007). Moreover, some cases have diagnostics-based and real-time evaluations which give the opportunity to go back at any stage in the circle of the decision process and change the decision depending on the new information which emerges under the evaluation (Hansson, 1994) (the non-sequential decision model, see figure 6). A crisis management team is the main player for decision makers to depend on to make crisis decisions, because the crisis management team in most cases is the one who gives the needed information before and during the crisis as the team owns the responsibility in crisis preparedness and how to manage the potential crisis (Mukhopadhyay, 2005).
5.2.2 Local Culture in Crises

Second research question was about understanding what local culture means in the perspective of crisis situations. This led to conceptualize the following question:

*RQ 2: What does local culture mean in crisis perspective?*

There are different concepts, views, and definitions of culture found and prepared in a list of 164 different definitions in 1952 by Kroeber and Kluckhohn (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). Since the culture definition is discussable and has a long literature, the huge range in definition is valid for local culture as well, especially when it comes to crises. As mentioned previously in the theoretical framework, there are different definitions of local culture. Some sources define local culture as a group of people in a particular place who define themselves as a collective or a community, who are sharing same experiences, traits, customs, and work to preserve those common values in order to stay unique and distinguishing themselves from others. (Quia, n.d.).

Tabili (2011) argues that cultures have been shaped through global interactions and interpenetrations and even localities get their unique character through intersecting national and other global processes. In his same research, Tabili argues that migration and any other types of movement can change culture as well.

When it comes to crisis situations, there is limited research about the definition of local culture. Local culture can easily be defined as it is in a theoretical framework, but when it comes to crisis context, it becomes complicated as people sometimes have to move to other places and be “local” to that new place which changes what local culture refers to. When a certain population moves to another place, local culture may not refer to a single culture since there should be culture of place and culture of “new” comers. If both cultures
were close to each other geographically before crises, there may be some similarities which may not be enough to call them as same culture. In this research local culture does not only refer to culture of host community. In crises, local culture does not necessarily refer to one single culture belonging to a certain area. Therefore, in current research, local culture refers to both host culture and culture of the population affected by crises who may arrive at the place.

5.2.3 Effects of Local Culture on Crisis Decision-Making

The Third research question wanted to explore how the local culture affects crisis decision-making. This led to formalize the following question as the main research question:

RQ 3: How does local culture affect crisis decision-making?

Participants of the current research almost share the same perspective about the effect of local culture on their refugee crises management. As mentioned in the analysis, there are different stages of managing a crisis. Effects of local culture on the decision-making process in refugee crisis management is begun within the preparedness stage. Preparing materials and programs should be culturally sensitive and suitable for the affected people and their values (IOM, 2019). As the majority of participants have mentioned above (5.1.2.1 Crisis Preparedness), organizations are taking local culture and values into consideration when they are preparing for refugee crises. Even though there are differences in the ways each of those organizations’ work and prepare, all their decisions are affected by local cultural values.

When programs or projects are implemented, the culture of the target population is considered by decision makers. One affected point in decision making is to convert the things that are going to be done into context. Participants mentioned that not converting into local culture and applying the
same thing in all cultures may harm the beneficiaries which is against their core principles (UNHCR, 2015). The necessity of applying projects in accordance with local values demonstrates the effects of local culture on decision making and actions taken by organizations.

Even though there is not an abundance of literature about the impacts of local culture on organizations’ actions, the current literature states that organizations are adapting themselves. Environmental conditions may force organizations to develop a capacity and infrastructure bringing about adaptation to the needs of conditions (Costanza et. al. 2015), and one of those needs is to bring suitable help to those people which are acceptable by their cultural norms. Hart et al., (1993) point out that the “local presence” of decision makers at the operational level, will eventually lead to more successful crisis management. In response to the refugee crisis, there are different stages in which local culture is taken into consideration and strategies are followed. One of them is dealing with cultural conflict, cultural mediation. All cultures may have their own beliefs and values system (IOM, 2019).

All of the participants argue that sometimes they are facing some cultural conflict which occurs between their values and local values. Child marriage is one of them. All participants mentioned that they are against child marriage and sometimes they are working in a culture where child marriage is “normal.” Even though they are against it, they mentioned that they are respecting the local culture. They mediate their culture and values with local values and do not instigate conflict. All participants argue that they behave and make their implementation in accordance with local values. Lucy mentions, otherwise, making decisions without local culture will be a colonialist attitude. Another way local culture affects decision making is within the recruiting process of organizations, localization. Samer mentions that they localize their staff to be able to have more effective communication with beneficiaries. That is aligned with the Wall (1990) study which says that local employees generally have
more connections in their local environment, and it is easier for them to build relationships with beneficiaries. Asif also argues that taking benefits of local sources makes it easier to deal with local culture which is necessary for implementation. Most organizations and practitioners generally intend to include cultural awareness and sensitivity in all aspects of social service they are providing (Graham, 2009). When they are localizing, their staff may not be enough in the same sense. Samer argues that local values decide on the gender of their staff as well. Especially, in conservative societies they must recruit a certain number of females who are expected to work only with female beneficiaries which shows a certain impact of local culture on recruitment policy of organizations.
6 Conclusion

6.1 Key Conclusions

This thesis aimed to explore how local culture affects decision making in crisis situations. The findings demonstrate that there are significant effects of local culture on the decision-making process in crises. The participants of the current research have mentioned that local culture and its dynamics are taken into consideration in all steps of interfering with any phase of the crisis. Taking local culture into consideration is the beginning in preparing, responding and aftermath evaluation of crisis decisions.

All participants mentioned that local culture affects their planning deciding which kind of support will be provided. Participants pointed out that the contents of preparing and planning have to be culturally sensitive. They argued that when preparing any kind of aid, cultural values and beliefs are carefully paid attention to. Otherwise, it is not possible for them to reach their aimed objectives. In preparing for crises, participants claimed they are carefully trying to ensure the inclusion of people and maintaining social fabrics.

After careful preparation of crises, participants pointed out that they try to respond to the crises in culturally sensitive ways which indicates local culture directly affects their decision making in response. In the crisis response, participants mentioned they have to know how not to challenge cultural values and beliefs risking a decrease in the effects of aid and will not be beneficial while dealing with crises effects. All participants came up with similar ways and strategies to not challenge local culture and be coherent with the local values. One method is contextualizing, for example, the act of contextualizing the content of aids, which refers to eliminating the influences and values of outsider contexts before it is applied in the local culture or context. Participants argued that any activity or aid cannot be applied in all cultures in the same way and be provided for all people who have different cultural backgrounds and
values. In other words, they make decisions depending on local culture which is conceptualized as contextualization into the local values.

Participants pointed out that there are also some difficulties dealing with some cultural conflicts which occur between their values and local culture values. That is, values of the organizations can be in conflict with local values (e.g., child marriage is unacceptable by those organizations while it may be a part of local culture). Those kinds of cultural conflicts are usually resolved with cultural mediation. The empirical findings show that although organizations face such conflicts, they regulate their decisions and do not challenge the local people. They accommodate their decisions and find cultural mediation within local values.

Another finding was the effects of local culture on organizational decision-making. This could be seen in the act of localization. In empirical data, it is found that organizations make decisions to deal with local cultural values. One of the decisions is about the recruitment process of staff. Participants mentioned that they try to localize their staff in order to deal with the local culture so they can manage local needs, because local staff are the best choice to deal with culture since they know the culture.

To summarize, findings advocate that local culture has undeniable effects on the decision-making process in crisis situations. In every step of crisis response, decision makers have to take the local culture into consideration and ensure their decisions are applicable within it. Local culture affects decisions in preparing, responding and in the aftermath evaluation of crisis decisions.

6.2 Theoretical Contribution

The research has contributed theoretically into the field of crisis management, decision-making and local culture by relating all of them theoretically and thus expanding the body of knowledge on how the ‘local presence’ is important for
decision makers to have the needed knowledge about the cultural as well as the political aspects of the environment that are facing crises, in which decision makers are trying to solve its problems (‘t Hart, Rosenthal and Kouzmin, 1993). Moreover, the research extended the knowledge in some theoretical concepts that are found in the empirical data review. The research linked those concepts to the literature, and then added new perspectives to it. The concepts can be conceptualized in centralization, contextualization, and cultural mediation. Furthermore, the research demonstrated new understanding of the concept of localization from a non-profit point of view since this concept was widely presented in the literature from a profit-based perspective and did not give much attention to the non-profit perspective (see 3.3.3).

6.3 Practical Contribution

This research builds on the organizations which are continuously dealing with crises management in different countries. The study has revealed substantial information about effects of local culture on decision making of all phases of crisis management especially in crisis preparedness and crisis response. The authors have highlighted the importance of cultural awareness when it comes to interfering crises in a different cultural context than the culture of the organization itself, to deal with the uniqueness of local values, and to know how to evaluate those differences and deal with them. To summarize, it can be concluded that the study has offered useful knowledge about managing crises in different cultures.

The study provides valuable advice to those who have to manage crises when it is related to the contents of their plans, how to deal with cultural conflicts, how to get benefits from local sources, and how to adapt to the local culture. In addition, special attention is placed on the need to be conscious about the nature of a society at a certain place and time, which can be different than any other culture.
Finally, the research has highlighted the needs of decision makers to be highly aware of local differences and know how to deal with them.

### 6.4 Social Contribution

This research’s social contribution can be seen in its impact on both crisis-affected local populations and organization decision makers who are responding to crises in different cultures. For the crisis-affected population, when decision makers respond to crises, they should know how to act and be aware of local cultural dynamics. This results in an increase to the benefits for the local population affected by crises.

For organization decision makers, it is vital to know how to deal with challenges that are related to the local culture, because that will increase the effectiveness of aids and staff work. When decision makers do not know local culture and its dynamics, even if they are aiming for good resolutions, the results may not be as positive as they intend. Therefore, being aware of local culture and knowing how to approach it will help organizations’ leaders and decision-makers to make effective decision-making, which will make it easier to extend their goals as they intend in their response plan.

### 6.5 Future Research

In consideration of this research, it is believed that for future studies, it can be good to increase both the number of participants as such, and the number of female participants specifically, since experiences of female leaders and decision-makers can add different perspectives to future studies. Moreover, as the study examines the relationship between culture, decision making and crises, it may be beneficial to work with groups of junior staff as well. That is, those who are in direct contact with the population, as this can provide valuable information about how beneficiaries approach those culturally sensitive decisions in crises.
6.6 Work Progress and Authors Contribution

As it is known, the process of research is often non-linear, editing and changes go into with the process of the research. In this research however, it was challenging to work remotely under these special circumstances of the pandemic of Covid-19. Long periods were spent on distance discussions between us, contacting potential participants, organizing interviews, transcripting them, analyzing them, and finalizing the whole work. The work was equally divided between us, we both attended all interviews, participated during the whole process, kept in touch throughout the day to ensure we each reached a state of shared understanding about each subject during the study. The research was done by being open to each other's ideas, recommendations, and suggestions.
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8 Appendix A: Interview Guide

**Background**

1. What are your main responsibilities and what do you make decisions about?
2. How many years’ experience have you had in I/NGO?
3. What kind of work do you do on a normal day, when it’s not a crisis?
4. What is it that is challenging with the work you do?
5. What kind of training and education have you had, and does it fit with your duties?
6. How would you describe the culture that you grew up in, for example when it comes to education?
7. What kind of organizational culture do you have in the organization?

**Decision making**

8. In what areas do you make clear decisions, what kind of decisions do you do on a daily basis?
9. How are decisions made in your organizations? Can you elaborate about the process?
10. What decisions are formal and what are more informal and comes with the responsibility?
11. How do you define decision culture?
12. In what ways would you say that the local culture affects your decision making, both when it comes to formal (board) decisions and informal (responsibility) decisions?

**Crises**

13. What kind of crisis management do you have?
14. How decisions are made under crisis?

15. How do you prepare your organization to deal with, for example, refugees’ crisis?

16. What are the cultural aspects to be considered for example when dealing with, for example, refugees’ crisis? They can be beliefs, values, etc., can you elaborate about them?

17. How do you do the aftermath evaluation of your decisions that are taken during refugees’ crisis? Could you elaborate on how you measure your performance for example while dealing with refugees’ crisis?

18. How do you think the aspects of the cultural setting affect your decision-making process in dealing with, for example, refugees’ crises and what are the outcomes of these decisions?