

Managing School Crises Through Communication: How Supportive Communication Relates to Protocol Readiness in Croatian Schools

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Abstract

The study investigates how supportive, timely and transparent crisis-related communication in schools is associated with protocol readiness and staff preparedness to respond to unexpected events. A quantitative survey was conducted among 201 employees from primary and secondary schools in eastern Croatia. The questionnaire captured four domains: supportive crisis communication; organisation and crisis protocols; employees' self-assessed readiness to act in crisis situations; and the consistency of implementing and monitoring school safety measures. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis. Results show positive and statistically significant associations between supportive crisis communication and (1) employees' perceptions of the quality and accessibility of crisis protocols and procedures and (2) employees' self-assessed readiness to respond in crisis situations. Patterns in item-level relationships indicate that clear channels for informing parents and the public, access to training and resources and availability of professional support are linked with stronger perceptions of organisational preparedness. The paper contributes evidence from the Croatian school context and translates employee perceptions into actionable levers for educational management aimed at strengthening school crisis preparedness and organisational resilience.

Keywords: Crisis communication; Crisis management protocols; Organisational readiness; Teacher preparedness; School safety.

Introduction

Education systems, including the education system of the Republic of Croatia, are facing growing safety and crisis-related challenges that require continuous adaptation of leadership strategies and protocols in order to protect students and staff. In Croatia, several recent, highly publicised incidents in and around schools, including a tragic event in the Zagreb neighbourhood of Prečko, have prompted the introduction of new safety protocols and stricter protection measures in educational institutions (Ministry of Science, Education, and Youth, 2025). These developments show that the Croatian school system is not only dealing with „constant change” in a general sense, but is undergoing concrete regulatory and organisational adjustments in response to specific crisis events. Despite legal regulations and strategic commitments to ensuring a safe school environment and zero tolerance for violence, crisis situations continue to occur in Croatian schools. School-based crises or events related to schools may include a wide range of situations, such as various forms of peer violence, threats, self-harm, unauthorised entry into school premises, accidents and other emergencies that can endanger the safety and wellbeing of students and staff. In such circumstances, the ability of school employees to respond quickly and in a coordinated way depends not only on the existence of formal protocols, but also on how these protocols are communicated, understood and implemented in everyday practice. In this context, crisis communication represents a central dimension of crisis management in schools. It encompasses internal communication among staff, communication with students and parents, as well as communication with external stakeholders and the wider public through official channels and the media. Supportive, timely and transparent communication can facilitate the organisation of an effective response, reduce uncertainty and anxiety, and strengthen trust in school leadership, whereas insufficient or inadequate communication may deepen confusion, mistrust and organisational fragmentation. At the same time, schools operate within a complex legal and procedural framework that prescribes procedures for different types of crisis situations, but the extent to which these documents are known, accessible and operationalised by staff may vary considerably.

A review of international research confirms that, beyond the Croatian context, schools face notable shortcomings in procedures and crisis management. Debes's (2021) study conducted in primary schools in Northern Cyprus shows that teachers rate themselves as relatively prepared to manage crisis situations. In a similar vein, research by Karasavidou and Alexopoulos (2019) in Greek primary schools indicates that schools face a variety of crisis events, but organisational readiness and teachers' level of preparedness remain limited. Olinger Steeves et al. (2017) further demonstrate, based on an analysis of crisis response plans and staff perceptions in six U.S. primary schools, that although employees generally feel prepared, their participation in preparedness activities is limited and their descriptions of procedures are inconsistent. Taken together, these findings support growing evidence from research and strategic

documents that emphasise the importance of organisational readiness, clearly defined protocols and staff preparedness in educational settings. National regulations and protocols in Croatia define obligations related to school safety, crisis interventions and intersectoral collaboration, while international organisations and initiatives provide additional guidance on strengthening the resilience of educational institutions. However, much less is known about how school employees themselves perceive supportive crisis communication, the availability and clarity of crisis protocols, their own readiness to act in crisis situations, and the consistency with which safety measures are implemented in everyday school practice.

This study focuses on four key constructs: (1) supportive crisis communication in schools, (2) the organisation and readiness of crisis protocols, (3) employees' self-assessed preparedness to act in crisis situations, and (4) the consistency of implementation and monitoring of school safety measures. Drawing on the perceptions of teachers and other school employees, the study examines how supportive, timely and transparent communication about crises is related to the readiness of protocols and the preparedness of staff to respond to unexpected events. More specifically, the study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: Is supportive crisis communication associated with employees' perceptions of the quality and availability of crisis protocols and procedures?

RQ2: Is supportive crisis communication associated with employees' self-assessed preparedness to respond in crisis situations?

RQ3: Is supportive crisis communication associated with the consistency of implementation and monitoring of safety measures in schools? Based on these questions, the following hypotheses are formulated:

Hypothesis 1: Higher levels of supportive crisis communication are positively associated with employees' perceptions of the organisation and readiness of crisis protocols.

Hypothesis 2: Higher levels of supportive crisis communication are positively associated with employees' self-assessed preparedness to act in crisis situations.

Hypothesis 3: Higher levels of supportive crisis communication are positively associated with the consistency of implementation and monitoring of safety measures in schools.

The empirical part of the study is based on a quantitative survey conducted among 201 employees of primary and secondary schools in eastern Croatia. The questionnaire included four subscales corresponding to the key constructs listed above, along with items on respondents' sociodemographic and professional characteristics. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation analysis to examine the relationships among supportive crisis communication, protocol organisation, staff preparedness, and the implementation of safety measures.

By translating employees' perceptions into empirical indicators, the study seeks to identify specific organisational and communication levers that principals, student

support services and policymakers can use to strengthen crisis preparedness and school resilience in Croatia. In doing so, the paper addresses an important research gap: although international literature increasingly examines crisis management, school safety and the role of communication in educational settings, empirical evidence from the Croatian context – especially on the relationships between supportive crisis communication, protocol readiness, staff preparedness and the implementation of safety measures – remains limited. The findings aim to help fill this gap and to offer actionable implications for educational leadership and education policy in the Croatian school system. Building on these aims, the next section outlines the theoretical and conceptual foundations of crisis, crisis management and crisis communication in educational settings, as well as the key national and international frameworks that shape school safety and crisis response.

Theoretical and conceptual background/framework

In the literature, crises are often linked to the notion of hazard, understood as a process, phenomenon or human activity that can cause serious harm to people, property or the environment (FAO, 2020; Boin et al., 2010). In educational settings, crises are unexpected and undesired situations with potentially severe consequences for students and staff that require a coordinated institutional response. Within this framework, crisis management is typically defined as a set of activities aimed at overcoming situations that threaten an organisation's functioning or survival, including the planning and implementation of measures to achieve key objectives and restore stability (Ivanović, 2014).

From a broader social science perspective, crisis management includes tasks such as recognising a crisis, making and coordinating decisions, interpreting events, assigning responsibility, bringing the crisis to an end and learning from experience. This understanding makes it possible to view crises not only as threats, but also as opportunities to strengthen institutional capacities and organisational resilience (Boin et al., 2010). In schools, crisis events may encompass a wide range of situations, such as severe forms of violence, sexual abuse, suicide, traffic accidents, vandalism, fires and natural disasters, which may cause serious harm to students and staff or expose them to such harm (MacNeil & Topping, 2007). In these circumstances, educational institutions have a primary obligation to protect the rights, safety and health of children through prevention and timely action, in line with constitutional and legal obligations and sectoral policies (Ministry of Science, Education and Youth, 2025).

School crisis preparedness, therefore, depends on both systemic arrangements and everyday practice. The effectiveness of protection systems rests on the competences and capacities of professionals who act not only in acute crises, but also in phases of prevention and preparedness (Republic of Croatia, 2020). Research increasingly highlights that successful crisis management in schools requires clear organisational structures, defined roles, continuous training and regular drills, as well as attention

to the social, emotional, cognitive and physical dimensions of preparedness (Debes, 2021). At the same time, contemporary approaches move away from fragmented measures and instead emphasise the interdependence of different elements of school safety and resilience. Within this broader field, crisis communication has a specific and central role. Crisis plans and protocols are key tools for restoring stability and strengthening school stakeholders' capacity to respond effectively in emergencies (MacNeil & Topping, 2007). In crisis situations, staff, students, parents, the media, and the wider public have a much greater need for accurate and timely information than in routine circumstances, often expecting communication almost in „real time”. Effective crisis communication, therefore, involves planning communication strategies and channels, establishing and training a crisis communication team, appointing a spokesperson, and ensuring that information about the course and consequences of events, as well as about postcrisis measures, is transparent and accessible (Novak, 2001). The absence of clear communication plans and procedures can lead to serious consequences, including injury or loss of life (Karasavidou & Alexopoulos, 2019).

In Croatia, school safety is regulated by a legal and regulatory framework that includes the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools and related regulations, while in everyday practice, national protocols and internal school documents play a crucial role. Key instruments include, among others, the Protocol on the Implementation of Psychological Crisis Intervention in the Education System (Ministry of Science and Education, 2015), the Protocol on the Control of Entry to and Exit from School Premises adopted after the incident in the Zagreb neighbourhood of Prečko (Ministry of Science, Education and Youth, 2025), and several protocols relating to violence among children and youth, domestic violence, sexual violence and procedures for children separated from their parents (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2013, 2019, 2023, 2024). These national documents are operationalised through internal school regulations, safety plans, codes of ethics and schoolspecific protocols, as well as through the work of security staff, crisis teams and trained employees. Together, they define the formal framework for crisis protocols, organisational measures and staff responsibilities – areas that are directly reflected in employees' perceptions of protocol readiness and organisational preparedness examined in this study.

In addition to formal regulations and protocols, schools can draw on a range of national and international guidelines and tools that support crisis preparedness, psychosocial support and communication. In the Croatian context, these include guidelines and instructions issued by the Ministry of Science and Education and the Education and Teacher Training Agency on how to respond to threats and how to strengthen children and young people for crisis situations (e.g., Education and Teacher Training Agency, 2022; Ministry of Science and Education, 2017, 2023), as well as programmes such as the Croatian Red Cross initiative „Safer Schools and Kindergartens”, which emphasises staff training, evacuation drills and the integration of safetyrelated content into teaching (Croatian Red Cross, 2020; Tomić Latinac, 2023). At the international level, United

Nations agencies and partner networks (e.g., UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDRR) and civil society organisations provide manuals, standards and educational materials that promote disaster risk reduction, resilience and child protection in educational environments (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2025). Although these documents and tools are not the primary focus of this study, they form an important contextual backdrop for understanding how schools conceptualise crisis communication, staff preparedness, protocol implementation and school safety.

A consistent finding across this body of work is that purely informational or fragmented approaches to disaster risk reduction and school safety are insufficient. Risk education limited to isolated campaigns or narrowly focused postcrisis training does not necessarily reduce vulnerability and may obscure shortcomings in prevention and preparedness (Shaw & Krishnamurthy, 2007). Instead, schools need to engage in comprehensive crisis planning and protocol implementation, grounded in evidence and systematically integrated into everyday practice. For schools, this means linking formal crisis plans and legal obligations to continuous professional development, as well as establishing a clear division of roles and mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of safety measures. Building on this theoretical and strategic framework, the present study focuses specifically on the interrelationships between supportive crisis communication, the organisation's perceived readiness for crisis protocols, employees' self-assessed preparedness to act in crisis situations, and the consistency of safety measure implementation in Croatian schools. While national and international documents define what schools should do, less is known about how staff experience communication practices, the availability of protocols and their own preparedness in everyday school life. By examining these perceptions and their interrelations, the study provides empirical evidence on the extent to which crisis communication in schools is linked to protocol readiness, staff preparedness and perceived safety practices in the Croatian context.

Methodology

Aim of the study and research hypotheses

The aim of this study is to examine how employees of primary and secondary schools in eastern Croatia perceive supportive crisis communication and the extent to which it is associated with the organisation of crisis response and crisis protocols, their self-assessed preparedness to act in crisis situations, and the consistent implementation of safety measures in schools. In line with this aim, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant positive association between supportive crisis communication and the organisation of crisis response and crisis protocols.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant positive association between supportive crisis communication and employees' self-assessed preparedness to act in crisis situations.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant positive association between supportive crisis communication and the consistency of implementation and monitoring of safety measures in schools.

In this way, the theoretical premise about the role of supportive, timely and transparent communication in crisis management is translated into clearly operationalised relationships between key organisational aspects of school crisis preparedness.

Sample and procedure

The sample comprises 201 employees from primary and secondary schools in eastern Croatia. Of the total of 201 participants, 27 (13.4 %) are male, and 174 (86.6 %) are female. The study includes 169 (84.1%) employees from primary schools and 32 (15.9 %) employees from secondary schools. Regarding work context, 104 (51.7 %) participants work in urban settings, and 97 (48.3 %) in rural settings. In terms of work experience, the sample comprises 77 (38.3 %) participants with up to 7 years of service, 59 (29.4 %) with up to 15 years, 42 (20.9 %) with 16 to 25 years, and 23 (11.4 %) participants with more than 25 years of work experience.

Data collection was conducted in the second half of 2025 using an online survey administered via Google Forms. Snowball sampling was applied: initial contact was established through a network of school principals and student support professionals, and participants then forwarded the survey link to colleagues within their institutions. This approach enabled the rapid recruitment of a larger number of employees from different schools. At the same time, it entails a risk of sample bias, as more networked and motivated employees are more likely to participate, which means that the findings cannot be straightforwardly generalised to the population of all employees in Croatian schools. Only fully completed questionnaires were included in the analyses.

Measures and variables

For the purposes of this study, a survey questionnaire was developed to capture four key latent variables: (1) supportive crisis communication, (2) organisation of crisis response and crisis protocols, (3) employees' selfassessed preparedness to act in crisis situations, and (4) consistency of implementation and monitoring of safety measures in schools. In addition to these constructs, the questionnaire included sociodemographic and contextual variables (gender, length of work experience, type of school, urban/rural context), which were used to describe the sample and for selected additional analyses. All items were formulated as statements rated on a fivepoint Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). For each subscale, scores were computed as the mean of the respective items, with higher scores indicating higher levels of perceived supportive communication, clarity and availability of crisis protocols, selfassessed preparedness to act, and consistency in the implementation and monitoring of safety measures.

The subscale „supportive crisis communication” consists of 10 items that assess the extent to which the school implements preventive activities and training, cooperates with external institutions, and develops staff competencies relevant to crisis situations. The subscale „organisation of crisis response and crisis protocols” comprises 6 items

that focus on the existence and clarity of school support procedures, the availability of professional assistance, attention to mental health, and organisational support for employees in demanding situations. The subscale „employees’ selfassessed preparedness to act in crisis situations” consists of 10 items measuring perceived competence, clarity of roles and confidence in one’s ability to respond. The subscale „consistency of implementation and monitoring of safety measures in schools” includes 14 items on evacuation plans, the existence and functioning of a school safety team, the updating of safety plans, the clarity and suitability of protocols, the availability of documentation, communication with external stakeholders, and the frequency of crisis simulations.

All four subscales demonstrated satisfactory to very high internal consistency. The subscale „supportive crisis communication” (10 items) yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.821, indicating good reliability. The subscale „organisation of crisis response and crisis protocols” (6 items) had a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.848. The subscale „employees’ selfassessed preparedness to act in crisis situations” (10 items) showed very high reliability ($\alpha = 0.897$), while the subscale „consistency of implementation and monitoring of safety measures in schools” (14 items) achieved a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.927. These indicators suggest that the scales used are stable and reliable measures of the targeted constructs in the sample of primary and secondary school employees.

Data analysis

Statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 26. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample and study variables. Before applying inferential procedures, the assumptions of normality and linearity were examined. Normality was assessed by visual inspection of histograms and by examining skewness and kurtosis; observed deviations remained within acceptable limits for the use of Pearson’s correlation coefficient. Relationships between the key subscales were analysed using Pearson’s correlation coefficients with two-tailed tests, with significance levels of $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$. In additional analyses, associations and differences with demographic variables were examined using t-tests, one-way ANOVA, nonparametric tests (Mann–Whitney U, Kruskal–Wallis), and multiple regression analyses to assess the potential contribution of sociodemographic characteristics to supportive crisis communication.

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles of research in the social sciences. Participants were guaranteed anonymity and the possibility to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. Participation was voluntary, and data were collected and processed exclusively for scientific purposes, with full protection of participants’ privacy and confidentiality.

Results

A total of 201 participants took part in the study, and Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the sociodemographic indicators of the sample.

Table 1
Sample characteristics

VARIABLE	CATEGORY	N	%
Gender	Male	27	13.4
	Female	174	86.6
School level	Primary school	169	84.1
	Secondary school	32	15.9
Work context	Urban	104	51.7
	Rural	97	48.3
Years of experience	≤ 7 years	77	38.3
	8–15 years	59	29.4
	16–25 years	42	20.9
	> 25 years	23	11.4

Before analysing the relationships between the key variables, the internal consistency of the measurement scales was examined, and all four subscales showed good to very high reliability (Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.821 to 0.927). On this basis, the following section presents the results of the correlation analysis, which examines the associations between supportive communication and the organisation of crisis response and crisis protocols, employees' self-assessed preparedness, and the consistency of implementation of safety measures in schools.

Hypothesis 1 (RQ1): Relationship between supportive crisis communication and the organisation of crisis response and crisis protocols

At the level of composite variables (Table 2), a strong positive association was found between supportive crisis communication and the organisation of crisis response and crisis protocols ($r = 0.719$, $p < 0.01$). The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.517$) indicates that approximately 52% of the variance in employees' perceptions of the organisation of crisis response and crisis protocols is accounted for by its association with supportive crisis communication. This finding suggests that, in this sample, employees who perceive higher levels of supportive communication also tend to report greater clarity, availability and development of crisis protocols, thereby supporting hypothesis 1 on the association between communication practices and organisational preparedness.

Table 2
Correlation between variables Communication aimed at providing support in crisis situations and Organisation and protocols in crisis situations

Variables	r	r ²
Communication aimed at providing support in crisis situations		
Organisation and protocols in crisis situations	.719**	.517

** $p < .01$

Table 3 presents the most salient associations between individual items of these two subscales.

Table3

The most significant correlations between subscales Communication aimed at providing support in crisis situations and Organisation and protocols in crisis situations

Most significant correlations Hypothesis 1		r(p)
My school has a predefined way of informing parents and the public (phone call, SMS, email, media, app).	The school actively encourages mutual support and cooperation among employees in resolving crisis situations.	.629**
The school provides employees with access to training, resources and support to strengthen communication skills and psychological resilience.	I know that the school employees also have the opportunity to seek professional advice or help (pedagogue, psychologist, external associate, etc.).	.606**
My school has a predefined way of informing parents and the public (phone call, SMS, email, media, app).	I know that the school employees also have the opportunity to seek professional advice or help (pedagogue, psychologist, external associate, etc.).	.596**
All employees at my school know where they can find crisis protocols (protocols, regulations, instructions, etc.) and familiarise themselves with them.	The school provides employees with access to training, resources, and support to strengthen communication skills and psychological resilience.	.561**
All employees at my school know where they can find crisis protocols (protocols, regulations, instructions, etc.) and familiarise themselves with them.	I know that the school employees also have the opportunity to seek professional advice or help (pedagogue, psychologist, external associate, etc.).	.541**
My school has clearly defined protocols for different crisis situations.	The school has established procedures to support employees in the event of stress or professional burnout.	.511**
My school has a predefined way of informing parents and the public (phone call, SMS, email, media, app).	The school provides employees with access to training, resources, and support to strengthen communication skills and psychological resilience.	.499**
A school safety team has been formed at the school, which takes the lead in emergency situations.	The school gives sufficient attention to mental health topics (e.g. workshops, lectures, counselling).	.496**
All employees at my school know where they can find crisis protocols (protocols, regulations, instructions, etc.) and familiarise themselves with them.	The school has established procedures to support employees in the event of stress or professional burnout.	.484**
A school safety team has been formed at the school, which takes the lead in emergency situations.	I know that the school employees also have the opportunity to seek professional advice or help (pedagogue, psychologist, external associate, etc.).	.445**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The results presented in Table 3 show several patterns that are consistent with the theoretical assumptions. The strongest associations ($r > 0.60$) were observed between predefined ways of informing parents and the public and internal support mechanisms, as well as between access to training and resources and the availability of professional assistance. Such findings suggest that external communication channels and internal support systems are closely interlinked. Moderate to strong associations ($r = 0.45-0.56$) were found between the availability of protocols, procedures for supporting staff and attention to mental health, indicating that formal crisis structures correspond to psychosocial support systems.

Hypothesis 2 (RQ2): Relationship between supportive crisis communication and employees' selfassessed preparedness

The results in Table 4 show a strong positive association between supportive crisis communication and employees' selfassessed preparedness to act in crisis situations ($r = 0.591$, $p < 0.01$). The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.349$) indicates that approximately 35% of the variance in employees' selfassessed preparedness to act in crisis situations is accounted for by its association with supportive crisis communication. In schools where employees more strongly perceive that the school informs, empowers and supports them, they tend to report higher levels of perceived competence, role clarity and confidence in their own ability to respond, thereby confirming hypothesis 2 on the association between supportive communication and employees' preparedness for crisis response.

Table4
Relationship between variables *Communication focused on providing support in school and Employee readiness to act in crisis situations*

Variables	r	r ²
Communication aimed at providing support		
Employee readiness to act in crisis situations	.591**	.349

** $p < .01$

In Table 5, the most salient associations between individual items of these two subscales are presented.

The results point to key patterns in the relationship between supportive communication and employees' selfassessed preparedness. The strongest associations ($r > 0.55$) were observed between access to training and resources, on the one hand, and the availability of professional support and communication readiness, on the other. This pattern suggests that continuous professional development may be linked to practical capacities for responding in crisis situations. Moderate associations ($r = 0.45-0.51$) between crisis preparedness, attention to mental health and the availability of professional support indicate that psychological resilience and technical preparedness may operate synergistically.

Table 5

Most significant correlations between variables Communication focused on providing support in school and Employee self-assessment of readiness to act in crisis situations

Most significant correlations Hypothesis 2		r(p)
The school provides employees with access to training, resources, and support to strengthen communication skills and psychological resilience.	I know that school employees also have the opportunity to seek advice or help from experts (counsellors, psychologists, external associates, etc.).	.606**
In the event of a crisis, I know how and whom to notify (emergency services, parents, media).	The school provides employees with access to training, resources, and support to strengthen communication skills and psychological resilience.	.561**
In the event of a crisis, I know how and whom to notify (emergency services, parents, media).	I know that school employees also have the opportunity to seek advice or help from experts (counsellors, psychologists, external associates, etc.).	.541**
I know exactly who to contact in the event of a crisis at school.	The school has established procedures to support employees in the event of stress or professional burnout.	.511**
I feel ready to react in a crisis.	The school gives sufficient attention to mental health topics (e.g. workshops, lectures, counselling).	.496**
In the event of a crisis, I know how and whom to notify (emergency services, parents, media).	The school has established procedures to support employees in the event of stress or professional burnout.	.484**
I feel ready to react in a crisis.	I know that school employees also have the opportunity to seek advice or help from experts (counsellors, psychologists, external associates, etc.).	.445**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Hypothesis 3 (RQ3): Relationship between supportive crisis communication and the consistency of implementation and monitoring of safety measures

The analysis of the results in Table 6 also showed a moderately strong positive association between supportive crisis communication and the consistency of implementation and monitoring of safety measures in schools ($r = 0.565$, $p < 0.01$). The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.319$) indicates that approximately 32% of the variance in the consistency of implementation and monitoring of safety measures is accounted for by its association with supportive crisis communication. Employees in schools where they perceive higher levels of supportive and timely communication simultaneously tend to assess that safety measures are implemented more consistently and that protocols are clearer and better monitored, which is in line with hypothesis

Hypothesis 3 on the association between communication processes and the operational implementation of safety procedures.

Table 6

Relationship between variables Communication focused on support in crisis situations and Consistency of application and supervision of safety measures in a school

Variables	r	r ²
Communication aimed at support		
Consistency of application and supervision of safety measures	.565**	.319

** $p < .01$

Table 7 presents the most salient correlations between individual items of these two subscales.

Table 7

The most significant correlations between the variables Communication focused on providing support in school and Consistency of application and monitoring of safety measures in school

Most significant correlations Hypothesis 3		r(p)
The school provides employees with access to training, resources, and support to strengthen communication skills and psychological resilience.	I know that school employees also have the opportunity to seek advice or help from experts (counsellors, psychologists, external associates, etc.).	.606**
I believe that more work should be done to raise awareness of the importance of safety measures in schools.	The school has established procedures to support employees in cases of stress or professional burnout.	.511**
The school has a mechanism for controlling the implementation of safety measures (e.g., monitoring, reporting).	The school gives sufficient attention to mental health topics (e.g. workshops, lectures, counselling).	.496**
The school has a mechanism for controlling the implementation of safety measures (e.g., monitoring, reporting).	I know that school employees also have the opportunity to seek advice or help from experts (counsellors, psychologists, external associates, etc.).	.445**
I believe that more work should be done to raise awareness of the importance of safety measures in schools.	I know that school employees also have the opportunity to seek advice or help from experts (counsellors, psychologists, external associates, etc.).	.439**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 7 shows consistent patterns linking supportive communication with the consistency of safety measures. The strongest association ($r = 0.606$) is evident between access to training, resources, and support for strengthening communication skills and psychological resilience and the availability of professional assistance for staff, indicating the presence of a welldeveloped institutional support infrastructure. Moderate correlations ($r \approx 0.44-0.51$) between awareness of the importance of safety measures, mechanisms for monitoring their implementation, attention to mental

health and the availability of professional support suggest that safety culture in schools simultaneously relates to procedural compliance and staff wellbeing.

Discussion

The results obtained for the first research question support hypothesis 1, namely that there is a significant positive correlation between supportive crisis communication and the organisation of crisis response and crisis protocols (Table 2 and Table 3). The pattern of Pearson correlation coefficients suggests that basic communication and organisational principles, along with clear protocols, combined with training and mutual cooperation, are associated with employees feeling more empowered and better prepared for crisis situations. Structured and formally defined crisis management protocols are typically expected to include clearly defined goals, measures to prevent hazards and potential crises, procedures for mitigating and remediating consequences, and recovery mechanisms that enable a school to return to its pre-crisis state, with experiential learning for future preparedness. An integral component of such protocols usually involves the establishment of a crisis team, the allocation of roles to teachers, student support staff, parents and administrative staff, their continuous training and the coordination of all activities. Effective protocol implementation also appears to depend on high-quality cooperation with parents, the local community and relevant institutions. In addition, successful implementation is often linked to the quality of school leadership, the coordination of all stakeholders involved, regular training of teachers and other staff, the creation of a positive school climate that fosters cooperation and ethical behaviour, and the provision of sufficient material and human resources (Karasavidou & Alexopoulos, 2019). Taken together, these considerations are consistent with the present results, which point to the importance of an integrated approach to crisis situations in schools, where effective communication channels, clearly defined protocols and accessible professional resources are perceived as going hand in hand with staff safety and psychological resilience.

The analysis of the results obtained for the second research question confirms hypothesis 2, that there is a significant positive correlation between supportive crisis communication and employees' self-assessed preparedness to act in crisis situations. The findings show a relatively high correlation ($r = 0.591$) and indicate a strong positive association between supportive communication and employees' readiness. This places particular emphasis on the role of the school leadership. From a managerial perspective, the results suggest that formalising clear communication channels (including procedures for informing parents and the public) is linked to stronger perceptions of protocol readiness and staff preparedness. In this study, employees' perceptions indicate that access to training, resources and professional support is closely related to both protocol-related organisation and self-assessed readiness to act in crisis situations. While causal conclusions cannot be drawn from a correlational design, such a comprehensive pattern of associations may help reduce professional burnout and increase perceptions of safety and effectiveness among school employees.

The analysis of the results (Table 6) shows a moderately strong positive correlation ($r = 0.565$) between supportive crisis communication and the consistency of the implementation and monitoring of safety measures in schools, which confirms hypothesis 3 that there is a statistically significant association between supportive crisis communication and the consistency of the implementation and monitoring of safety measures. These findings underline the importance of embedding crisis communication into everyday organisational routines rather than treating it as an ad hoc activity. The results indicate that school safety is conceptualised as a multidimensional system that encompasses institutional resources, education, supervision, and psychosocial support for staff. Strong correlations between access to training and the perception of available professional assistance highlight the potential synergy between professional development and psychological support. Furthermore, the observed associations between control mechanisms, awareness of the importance of safety measures and indicators related to reducing stress and strengthening mental health suggest that a safe school environment encompasses both emotional and organisational dimensions of resilience.

Research limitations

When interpreting the findings, it is important to consider several limitations of this study. The sample is convenient and was collected using snowball sampling in a single Croatian region, which increases the risk of bias and limits the generalisability of the results to all schools in Croatia. Furthermore, all data were collected at a single point in time, which increases the risk of common-method bias and precludes causal inference. Taken together, these limitations suggest caution in interpreting the findings and in generalising the results beyond the context of eastern Croatia. In addition, the study is situated in a specific national and regional context and does not include crosscultural comparisons with other education systems or crisis management models. Future research should therefore examine school crisis communication and protocol implementation in comparative and cross-cultural designs to assess the applicability of these findings across different cultural and institutional settings.

Managerial implications

These implications are directly derived from the observed associations between supportive crisis communication, protocol readiness, staff preparedness and the consistency of safety measures. School leaders (principals) can enhance crisis preparedness by formalising communication channels for key stakeholders (staff, parents, and the public) and by ensuring that crisis protocols are easily accessible and regularly updated. Continuous training, resources and structured professional support services appear to be closely linked to stronger perceptions of protocol readiness and employee preparedness. Establishing or empowering a school safety or crisis team can operationalise these measures and improve coordination during emergencies. In addition to staff-focused measures, schools should consider how cultural values, community expectations and family involvement shape communication norms and stakeholders' trust during crises,

and tailor crisis communication strategies accordingly. Future programmes could more systematically involve parents, the local community and relevant institutions in planning and practising crisis protocols, as well as adapt communication strategies to the specific cultural and social characteristics of the local context.

Conclusions

The education system of the Republic of Croatia is founded on a clearly defined legal and regulatory framework. The results of this study, based on a convenience sample of schools in eastern Croatia, indicate that teachers and other school staff report a relatively high level of perceived preparedness to act in crisis situations. The results confirm hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 and point to the need for further examination of the effects of structured intervention programmes aimed at strengthening schools' capacities for crisis management through clearly defined policies and systematic professional training. The results also show significant associations between crisis communication, the organisation of crisis response, safety protocols, staff preparedness and the implementation of safety measures. These associations highlight the need for integrated policies that link professional development, organisational structures and psychosocial support in order to enhance the resilience of educational institutions in crisis situations. Such a strategy is crucial for preventing professional burnout and improving crisis management, while simultaneously contributing to the systematic strengthening of safety within the education system. Investment in training and the clear structuring of school crisis teams directly contribute to better organisational capacity and greater staff selfconfidence in crisis situations.

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Upravljanje školskim krizama: povezanost podržavajuće komunikacije i spremnosti protokola u hrvatskim školama

Sažetak

Istraživanjem se ispituje kako su podržavajuća, pravovremena i transparentna krizna komunikacija u školama povezana sa spremnošću protokola i spremnošću zaposlenika za odgovor na neočekivane događaje. Kvantitativna anketa provedena je među 201 zaposlenikom osnovnih i srednjih škola u istočnoj Hrvatskoj. Upitnik je obuhvatio četiri dimenzije: podržavajuću kriznu komunikaciju, organizaciju i protokole za krize, samoprocijenjenu spremnost zaposlenika za djelovanje u kriznim situacijama te dosljednost provedbe i praćenja mjera sigurnosti u školama. Podatci su analizirani deskriptivnom statistikom i Pearsonovom korelacijskom analizom. Rezultati pokazuju pozitivne i statistički značajne povezanosti između podržavajuće krizne komunikacije i (1) percepcija zaposlenika o kvaliteti i dostupnosti protokola i postupaka za krize te (2) samoprocijenjene spremnosti zaposlenika za odgovor u kriznim situacijama. Uzorci u odnosima na razini stavki ukazuju da jasni kanali za obavještanje roditelja i javnosti, pristup edukacijama i resursima te dostupnost stručne podrške povezani su s jačim percepcijama organizacijske spremnosti. Članak donosi relevantne pokazatelje iz hrvatskoga školskog konteksta te predočava percepciju zaposlenika o važnosti obrazovnoga menadžmenta osnaživanjem spremnosti škola za krize i razvoj organizacijske otpornosti.

Ključne riječi: krizna komunikacija; organizacijska spremnost; protokoli upravljanja krizama; sigurnost u školama; spremnost nastavnika.

Uvod

Obrazovni sustavi, uključujući i obrazovni sustav Republike Hrvatske, suočavaju se s rastućim sigurnosnim i kriznim izazovima koji zahtijevaju kontinuirano prilagođavanje strategija vođenja i protokola radi zaštite učenika i zaposlenika. U Hrvatskoj je nekoliko recentnih, medijski snažno eksponiranih incidenata u i oko škola, uključujući tragičan događaj u zagrebačkoj četvrti Prečko, potaknulo uvođenje novih sigurnosnih protokola i strožih mjera zaštite u odgojnoobrazovnim ustanovama (Ministarstvo znanosti, obrazovanja i mladih, 2025). Ti razvojni trendovi pokazuju da se hrvatski školski

sustav ne suočava samo sa „stalnim promjenama” u općem smislu, nego prolazi kroz konkretne regulatorne i organizacijske prilagodbe kao odgovor na specifične krizne događaje. Unatoč zakonskim propisima i strateškim opredjeljenjima za osiguravanje sigurnoga školskog okružja i nulte tolerancije na nasilje, krizne se situacije i dalje pojavljuju u hrvatskim školama. Krizni događaji u školama mogu obuhvaćati širok raspon situacija, poput različitih oblika vršnjačkoga nasilja, prijetnji, samoozljeđivanja, neovlaštenoga ulaska u školske prostore, nesreća i drugih izvanrednih situacija koje mogu ugroziti sigurnost i dobrobit učenika i zaposlenika. U takvim okolnostima sposobnost školskih zaposlenika da brzo i usklađeno reagiraju ne ovisi samo o postojanju formalnih protokola, nego i o načinu na koji su preneseni, shvaćeni i provedeni u svakodnevnoj praksi. U tome kontekstu krizno komuniciranje predstavlja središnju dimenziju upravljanja krizama u školama. Ono obuhvaća internu komunikaciju među zaposlenicima, komunikaciju s učenicima i roditeljima, kao i komunikaciju s vanjskim dionicima i širom javnošću putem službenih kanala i medija. Podržavajuća, pravodobna i transparentna komunikacija može olakšati organizaciju učinkovitoga odgovora, smanjiti neizvjesnost i tjeskobu te ojačati povjerenje u vodstvo škole dok nedostatna ili neadekvatna komunikacija može produbiti zbrku, nepovjerenje i organizacijsku rascjepkanost. Istodobno škole djeluju unutar složenoga pravnog i proceduralnog okvira koji propisuje postupke za različite vrste kriznih situacija, no stupanj u kojem su ti dokumenti zaposlenicima poznati, dostupni i operacionalizirani može znatno varirati.

Pregled međunarodnih istraživanja potvrđuje da, izvan hrvatskoga konteksta, postoje značajni nedostaci u procedurama i upravljanju kriznim situacijama u školama. Studija Debesa (2021) provedena u osnovnim školama u Sjevernom Cipru pokazuje da učitelji sebe procjenjuju relativno spremnima za upravljanje kriznim situacijama. Slično tome, istraživanje Karasavidou i Alexopoulou (2019) u grčkim osnovnim školama upućuje na to da su škole suočene s raznolikim kriznim događajima, ali da su organizacijska spremnost i razina pripremljenosti nastavnika i dalje ograničene. Olinger Steeves i sur. (2017) dodatno pokazuju, na temelju analize planova kriznoga odgovora i percepcija školskoga osoblja u šest američkih osnovnih škola, da se zaposlenici općenito osjećaju pripremljeno, ali da je njihovo sudjelovanje u aktivnostima pripreme ograničeno te da su njihovi opisi procedura nedosljedni. Zajedno, ti nalazi podupiru rastući korpus istraživanja i strateških dokumenata koji naglašavaju važnost organizacijske spremnosti, jasno definiranih protokola i pripremljenosti zaposlenika u odgojnoobrazovnom kontekstu. Nacionalni propisi i protokoli u Hrvatskoj definiraju obveze vezane uz školsku sigurnost, krizne intervencije i međusektorsku suradnju, dok međunarodne organizacije i inicijative nude dodatne smjernice za jačanje otpornosti odgojnoobrazovnih ustanova. Ipak, mnogo je manje poznato o tome kako sami školski zaposlenici percipiraju podržavajuće krizno komuniciranje, dostupnost i jasnoću kriznih protokola, vlastitu spremnost za postupanje u kriznim situacijama te dosljednost provedbe sigurnosnih mjera u svakodnevnoj školskoj praksi.

Ovo je istraživanje usmjereno na četiri ključna konstrukta: (1) podržavajuće krizno komuniciranje u školama, (2) organiziranost i spremnost kriznih protokola, (3) samoprocijenjenu spremnost zaposlenika za djelovanje u kriznim situacijama i (4) dosljednost u provedbi i nadzoru školskih sigurnosnih mjera. Polazeći od percepcija učitelja i drugih školskih zaposlenika, istraživanje ispituje kako je podržavajuća, pravodobna i transparentna komunikacija o krizama povezana sa spremnošću protokola i pripremljenošću zaposlenika za reagiranje na neočekivane događaje. Točnije, istraživanje se usredotočuje na sljedeća istraživačka pitanja:

RQ1: Je li podržavajuće krizno komuniciranje povezano s percepcijama zaposlenika o kvaliteti i dostupnosti kriznih protokola i procedura?

RQ2: Je li podržavajuće krizno komuniciranje povezano sa samoprocijenjenom spremnošću zaposlenika za reagiranje u kriznim situacijama?

RQ3: Je li podržavajuće krizno komuniciranje povezano s dosljednošću provedbe i nadzora sigurnosnih mjera u školama?

Iz ovih istraživačkih pitanja proizlaze sljedeće hipoteze:

Hipoteza 1: Komunikacija usmjerena na podršku u kriznim situacijama značajno je pozitivno povezana s organizacijom, protokolima djelovanja u kriznim situacijama.

Hipoteza 2: Postoji značajna pozitivna povezanost između komunikacije usmjerene na podršku u kriznim situacijama i samoprocjene zaposlenika o spremnosti djelovanja u kriznim situacijama.

Hipoteza 3: Postoji značajna pozitivna povezanost između komunikacije usmjerene na podršku u kriznim situacijama i dosljednosti primjene i nadzora sigurnosnih mjera u školi.

Empirijski dio istraživanja temelji se na kvantitativnom anketnom istraživanju provedenom među 201 zaposlenikom osnovnih i srednjih škola u istočnoj Hrvatskoj. Upitnik je sadržavao četiri podskale koje odgovaraju navedenim ključnim konstruktima, kao i čestice o sociodemografskim i profesionalnim obilježjima ispitanika. Podatci su analizirani primjenom deskriptivne statistike i Pearsonove korelacijske analize radi ispitivanja odnosa između podržavajućeg akriznog komuniciranja, organiziranosti protokola, spremnosti zaposlenika i provedbe sigurnosnih mjera.

Prevođenjem percepcija zaposlenika u empirijske pokazatelje, cilj je istraživanja identificirati konkretne organizacijske i komunikacijske poluge koje ravnatelji, stručne službe i donositelji odluka mogu koristiti za jačanje krizne pripravnosti i otpornosti škola u Hrvatskoj. Na taj način rad zahvaća slabije istraženo područje: iako međunarodna literatura sve češće razmatra upravljanje krizama, školsku sigurnost i ulogu komunikacije u odgojnoobrazovnim ustanovama, empirijski dokazi iz hrvatskoga konteksta, osobito o povezanostima između podržavajućega kriznog komuniciranja, spremnosti protokola, pripremljenosti zaposlenika i provedbe sigurnosnih mjera još su uvijek ograničeni. Nalazi ovoga istraživanja nastoje pridonijeti popunjavanju te manjkavosti te ponuditi primjenjive implikacije za obrazovno upravljanje i obrazovne politike u hrvatskom

školskom sustavu. Polazeći od tih ciljeva, u sljedećem se poglavlju izlažu teorijsko i konceptualno utemeljenje pojmova krize, upravljanja krizom i kriznoga komuniciranja u odgojno-obrazovnome kontekstu, kao i ključni nacionalni i međunarodni okviri koji oblikuju školsku sigurnost i krizno reagiranje.

Teorijski i konceptualni okvir

U literaturi se kriza često povezuje s pojmom opasnosti, koja se razumijeva kao proces, pojava ili ljudska aktivnost koja može prouzročiti ozbiljnu štetu ljudima, imovini ili okolišu (FAO, 2020; Boin i sur., 2010). U odgojno-obrazovnome kontekstu krizama se smatraju neočekivane i neželjene situacije s potencijalno teškim posljedicama za učenike i zaposlenike koje zahtijevaju usklađen institucionalni odgovor. U tome se okviru upravljanje krizom tipično definira kao skup aktivnosti usmjerenih na prevladavanje situacija koje ugrožavaju funkcioniranje ili opstanak organizacije, uključujući planiranje i provedbu mjera za postizanje ključnih ciljeva i obnovu stabilnosti (Ivanović, 2014).

Iz šire društveno-znanstvene perspektive, upravljanje krizom obuhvaća zadaće poput prepoznavanja krize, donošenja i koordiniranja odluka, interpretacije događaja, pripisivanja odgovornosti, okončanja krize i učenja iz iskustva. Takvo razumijevanje omogućuje da se krize promatraju ne samo kao prijetnje, nego i kao prilike za jačanje institucionalnih kapaciteta i organizacijske otpornosti (Boin i sur., 2010). U školama krizni događaji mogu obuhvaćati širok raspon situacija, poput teških oblika nasilja, seksualnoga zlostavljanja, suicida, prometnih nesreća, vandalizma, požara i prirodnih katastrofa koje mogu dovesti do ozbiljne štete za učenike i zaposlenike ili ih njome ugroziti (MacNeil i Topping, 2007). U takvim okolnostima primarna je obveza odgojno-obrazovnih ustanova zaštititi prava, sigurnost i zdravlje djece putem prevencije i pravodobnoga djelovanja, u skladu s ustavnim i zakonskim obvezama te sektorskim politikama (Ministarstvo znanosti, obrazovanja i mladih, 2025).

Krizna pripravnost škola stoga ovisi i o sustavnim rješenjima i o svakodnevnoj praksi. Učinkovitost sustava zaštite počiva na kompetencijama i kapacitetima stručnjaka koji djeluju ne samo u akutnim krizama, nego i u fazama prevencije i pripreme (Republika Hrvatska, MUP, 2020). Istraživanja sve više naglašavaju da uspješno upravljanje krizom u školama zahtijeva jasne organizacijske strukture, definirane uloge, kontinuirano osposobljavanje i redovite vježbe, kao i pažnju posvećenu socijalnim, emocionalnim, kognitivnim i tjelesnim aspektima pripravnosti (Debes, 2021). Istodobno, suvremeni pristupi odmiču se od fragmentiranih mjera i umjesto toga ističu međuovisnost različitih elemenata školske sigurnosti i otpornosti. Unutar toga šireg područja krizno komuniciranje ima specifičnu i središnju ulogu. Krizni planovi i protokoli ključni su alati za uspostavljanje stabilnosti i jačanje sposobnosti školskih dionika da učinkovito reaguju na izvanrednim situacijama (MacNeil i Topping, 2007). U kriznim situacijama zaposlenici, učenici, roditelji, mediji i šira javnost imaju znatno veću potrebu za točnim i pravodobnim informacijama nego u rutinskim okolnostima, često očekujući komunikaciju gotovo u „stvarnom vremenu”. Učinkovito krizno komuniciranje stoga

uključuje planiranje komunikacijskih strategija i kanala, formiranje i osposobljavanje kriznoga komunikacijskog tima, imenovanje glasnogovornika te osiguravanje da informacije o tijeku i posljedicama događaja, kao i o mjerama nakon krize, budu transparentne i dostupne (Novak, 2001). Izostanak jasnih planova i komunikacijskih procedura može dovesti do ozbiljnih posljedica, uključujući ozljede ili gubitak života (Karasavidou i Alexopoulos, 2019).

U Hrvatskoj je školska sigurnost uređena pravnim i regulatornim okvirom koji obuhvaća Zakon o odgoju i obrazovanju u osnovnoj i srednjoj školi i povezane propise, no u svakodnevnoj praksi ključnu ulogu imaju nacionalni protokoli i interni školski dokumenti. Među ključnim instrumentima ubrajaju se, među ostalim, Protokol o provođenju psihološke krizne intervencije u odgojno-obrazovnom sustavu (Ministarstvo znanosti i obrazovanja, 2015), Protokol o kontroli ulaska i izlaska iz školskih ustanova, (Ministrstvo znanosti, obrazovanja i mladih, 2025) te nekoliko protokola koji se odnose na nasilje među djecom i mladima, nasilje u obitelji, seksualno nasilje i postupanje prema djeci odvojenoj od roditelja (Vlada Republike Hrvatske, 2013, 2019, 2023, 2024). Ti se nacionalni dokumenti operacionaliziraju putem internih školskih pravilnika, planova sigurnosti, kodeksa etike i posebnih školskih protokola, kao i radom zaštitara, kriznih timova i educiranih zaposlenika. Tako se definiraju formalni okviri kriznih protokola, organizacijskih mjera i odgovornosti zaposlenika kao područja koja se izravno odražavaju u percepcijama zaposlenika o spremnosti protokola i organizacijskoj pripravnosti, ispitanima u ovome istraživanju. Uz formalne propise i protokole, škole mogu koristiti različite nacionalne i međunarodne smjernice i alate koji podupiru kriznu pripravnost, psihosocijalnu podršku i komunikaciju. U hrvatskome kontekstu to uključuje smjernice i upute Ministarstva znanosti i obrazovanja te Agencije za odgoj i obrazovanje za postupanje u slučaju prijetnji i za osnaživanje djece i mladih za krizne situacije (npr. AZOO, 2022; Ministarstvo znanosti i obrazovanja, 2017, 2023), kao i programe poput inicijative Hrvatskog Crvenog križa „Sigurnije škole i vrtići”, koja naglašava edukaciju zaposlenika, vježbe evakuacije i integraciju sadržaja o sigurnosti u nastavu (Hrvatski Crveni križ, 2020; Tomić Latinac, 2023). Na međunarodnoj razini agencije Ujedinjenih naroda i partnerske mreže (npr. UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDRR) te organizacije civilnoga društva pružaju priručnike, standarde i obrazovne materijale koji promiču smanjenje rizika od katastrofa, otpornost i zaštitu djece u odgojno-obrazovnim okružjima (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2025). Iako ovi dokumenti i alati nisu primarni predmet ovoga istraživanja, oni čine važnu kontekstualnu pozadinu za razumijevanje načina na koji škole konceptualiziraju krizno komuniciranje, pripravnost zaposlenika, provedbu protokola i školsku sigurnost.

Dosljedan nalaz u ovome korpusu radova jest da isključivo informativni ili fragmentirani pristupi smanjenju rizika od katastrofa i školskoj sigurnosti nisu dostatni. Obrazovanje o rizicima ograničeno na pojedinačne kampanje ili usko usmjerene edukacije za postupanje nakon krize ne mora smanjiti ranjivost i može prikriti nedostatke u prevenciji i pripremi (Shaw i Krishnamurthy, 2007). Umjesto

toga, na razini škole potrebno je provoditi sveobuhvatno krizno planiranje i provedbu protokola, utemeljene na dokazima i sustavno integrirane u svakodnevnu praksu. Za škole to znači povezivanje formalnih kriznih planova i zakonskih obveza s kontinuiranim stručnim usavršavanjem, jasnom podjelom uloga i mehanizmima praćenja provedbe sigurnosnih mjera. Polazeći od ovoga teorijskog i strateškog okvira, ovo se istraživanje posebno usredotočuje na međuodnos između podržavajućega kriznog komuniciranja, organizacije i percipirane spremnosti kriznih protokola, samoprocijenjene spremnosti zaposlenika za djelovanje u kriznim situacijama te dosljednosti provedbe sigurnosnih mjera u hrvatskim školama. Dok nacionalni i međunarodni dokumenti definiraju što bi škole trebale činiti, manje je poznato kako zaposlenici doživljavaju komunikacijske prakse, dostupnost protokola i vlastitu spremnost u svakodnevnom školskom životu. Ispitivanjem tih percepcija i njihovih međusobnih odnosa, studija empirijski upućuje na nedostatak sustavnih pokazatelja o tome kako je krizno komuniciranje u školama povezano sa spremnošću protokola, spremnošću zaposlenika i percipiranim sigurnosnim praksama u hrvatskome kontekstu.

Metodologija

Cilj istraživanja i istraživačke hipoteze

Cilj je ovoga istraživanja ispitati kako zaposlenici osnovnih i srednjih škola u istočnoj Hrvatskoj percipiraju komunikaciju usmjerenu na podršku u kriznim situacijama te u kojoj je mjeri ona povezana s organizacijom i protokolima kriznoga djelovanja, samoprocjenom njihove spremnosti za postupanje u kriznim situacijama i dosljednom primjenom sigurnosnih mjera u školama. U skladu s tim postavljene su sljedeće hipoteze:

Hipoteza 1: komunikacija usmjerena na podršku u kriznim situacijama značajno je pozitivno povezana s organizacijom, protokolima djelovanja u kriznim situacijama.

Hipoteza 2: postoji značajna pozitivna povezanost između komunikacije usmjerene na podršku u kriznim situacijama i samoprocjene zaposlenika o spremnosti djelovanja u kriznim situacijama.

Hipoteza 3: postoji značajna pozitivna povezanost između komunikacije usmjerene na podršku u kriznim situacijama dosljednosti primjene i nadzora sigurnosnih mjera u školi.

Time se teorijsko polazište o ulozi podržavajuće, pravovremene i transparentne komunikacije u kriznom upravljanju prevodi u jasno operacionalizirane odnose između ključnih organizacijskih aspekata krizne pripravnosti u školama.

Uzorak i postupak

Uzorak istraživanja čini 201 zaposlenik osnovnih i srednjih škola iz područja istočne Hrvatske. Od ukupno 201 sudionika, 27 je muškoga (13,4 %), a 174 (86,6 %) ženskoga spola. U istraživanju sudjeluje 169 (84,1 %) zaposlenika osnovnih škola i 32 (15,9 %) zaposlenika srednjih škola. S obzirom na kontekst rada, 104 (51,7 %) sudionika radi u

urbanim, a 97 (48,3 %) u ruralnim sredinama. Prema duljini radnoga staža, u istraživanju je sudjelovalo 77 (38,3 %) ispitanika s do 7 godina staža, 59 (29,4 %) ispitanika s do 15 godina staža, 42 (20,9 %) ispitanika s 16 do 25 godina staža te 23 (11,4 %) ispitanika s više od 25 godina radnoga staža.

Prikupljanje podataka provedeno je u drugoj polovini 2025. godine putem *online* anketnoga upitnika u Google Forms obliku. Korišten je postupak uzorkovanja metodom „snježne grude” tako da je početni kontakt ostvaren preko mreže školskih ravnatelja i stručnih suradnika, a sudionici su zatim prosljeđivali poveznicu kolegama u svojim ustanovama. Ovakav pristup omogućio je brzo dosezanje većega broja zaposlenika iz različitih škola. Ovakav pristup ima i određeni rizik pristranosti uzorka, budući da veće izgleda za sudjelovanje imaju umreženiji i motiviraniji zaposlenici, pa se dobivene rezultate ne može jednostavno generalizirati na populaciju svih zaposlenika u hrvatskim školama. U analizu su uključeni samo potpuno ispunjeni upitnici.

Mjerni instrument i varijable

Za potrebe istraživanja konstruiran je anketni upitnik koji obuhvaća četiri ključne latentne varijable: (1) komunikacija usmjerena na pružanje podrške u kriznim situacijama, (2) organizacija i protokoli djelovanja u kriznim situacijama, (3) samoprocjena spremnosti zaposlenika za postupanje u kriznim situacijama te (4) dosljednost primjene i nadzora sigurnosnih mjera u školi. Uz navedene konstrukte, upitnik je uključivao i sociodemografske i kontekstualne varijable (spol, duljina radnoga staža, tip škole, urbani/ruralni kontekst), koje su korištene za opis uzorka i u pojedinim dodatnim analizama. Sve čestice formulirane su kao tvrdnje na koje su se sudionici izjašnjavali na Likertovoj skali od 1 (uopće se ne slažem) do 5 (u potpunosti se slažem). Rezultati na svakoj podskali izračunati su kao prosječna vrijednost čestica koje joj pripadaju, pri čemu viši rezultati označavaju višu razinu percipirane podržavajuće komunikacije, jasnoće i dostupnosti kriznih protokola, samoprocijenjene spremnosti na djelovanje te dosljedne primjene i nadzora sigurnosnih mjera.

Podskala „komunikacija usmjerena na podršku u kriznim situacijama” sastoji se od 10 čestica kojima se ispituje u kojoj mjeri škola provodi preventivne aktivnosti i edukacije, surađuje s vanjskim institucijama te razvija kompetencije zaposlenika relevantne za krizne situacije. Podskala „organizacija i protokoli u kriznim situacijama” obuhvaća 6 čestica usmjerenih na postojanje i jasnoću školskih procedura podrške, dostupnost stručne pomoći, brigu o mentalnom zdravlju i organizacijsku podršku zaposlenicima u zahtjevnim situacijama. Podskala „samoprocjena spremnosti zaposlenika za postupanje u kriznim situacijama” sastoji se od 10 čestica koje mjere doživljenu kompetentnost, jasnoću uloga i sigurnost u vlastitu sposobnost reagiranja. Podskala „dosljednost primjene i nadzora sigurnosnih mjera u školi” uključuje 14 čestica o planovima evakuacije, postojanju i funkcioniranju školskoga sigurnosnog tima, ažuriranju sigurnosnih planova, jasnoći i prilagođenosti protokola, dostupnosti dokumentacije, komunikaciji s vanjskim dionicima te učestalosti simulacija kriznih situacija.

Sve četiri podskale pokazale su zadovoljavajuću do vrlo visoku internu konzistentnost. Podskala „komunikacija usmjerena na podršku u kriznim situacijama” (10 čestica) ostvarila je Cronbachov alfa koeficijent 0,821 što upućuje na dobru pouzdanost. Podskala „organizacija i protokoli u kriznim situacijama” (6 čestica) ima Cronbachov alfa 0,848. Podskala „samoprocjena spremnosti zaposlenika za postupanje u kriznim situacijama” (10 čestica) pokazuje vrlo visoku pouzdanost ($\alpha = 0,897$), dok podskala „dosljednost primjene i nadzora sigurnosnih mjera u školi” (14 čestica) ostvaruje Cronbachov alfa 0,927. Ovi pokazatelji upućuju na to da su korištene skale stabilne i pouzdane u mjerenju ciljanih konstrukata u promatranom uzorku zaposlenika osnovnih i srednjih škola.

Statistička analiza provedena je u programu IBM SPSS Statistics 26. Za opis uzorka i varijabli korištene su deskriptivne statistike (frekvencije, postotci, aritmetičke sredine i standardne devijacije). Prije primjene inferencijalnih postupaka provjerene su osnovne pretpostavke normalnosti distribucije i linearne povezanosti. Normalnost je procijenjena kombinacijom vizualnoga pregleda histograma i pokazatelja asimetrije i spljoštenosti, pri čemu su uočena odstupanja bila unutar prihvatljivih granica za primjenu Pearsonova koeficijenta korelacije. Za ispitivanje odnosa između ključnih podskala korišten je Pearsonov koeficijent korelacije uz dvostrano testiranje i razine značajnosti $p < 0,05$ i $p < 0,01$. U dodatnim analizama ispitivane su povezanosti i razlike s demografskim varijablama primjenom t testa, jednofaktorske ANOVAe, neparametrijskih testova (Mann–Whitney U, Kruskal–Wallis) te višestruke regresijske analize, kako bi se procijenio potencijalni doprinos sociodemografskih obilježja komunikacijskoj podršci u kriznim situacijama.

Istraživanje je provedeno u skladu s etičkim načelima istraživanja u društvenim znanostima. Sudionicima je zajamčena anonimnost i mogućnost povlačenja iz istraživanja u bilo kojem trenutku bez negativnih posljedica. Sudjelovanje je bilo dobrovoljno, a podatci su prikupljeni i obrađeni isključivo u svrhu znanstvene analize, uz zaštitu privatnosti i povjerljivosti sudionika.

Rezultati

U istraživanju je sudjelovao ukupno 201 ispitanik, a u Tablici 1 prikazane su deskriptivne statistike za sociodemografske pokazatelje uzorka.

Tablica 1

Prije analize odnosa između ključnih varijabli ispitana je unutarnja konzistencija mjernih ljestvica, pri čemu su sve četiri podljestvice pokazale dobru do vrlo visoku pouzdanost (Cronbachov alfa u rasponu od 0,821 do 0,927). Na toj osnovi, u nastavku se prikazuju rezultati korelacijske analize, koja ispituje povezanosti komunikacije usmjerene na podršku u kriznim situacijama s organizacijom i protokolima postupanja tijekom krizne situacije, spremnosti zaposlenika te konzistentnošću provedbe sigurnosnih mjera u školama.

Hipoteza 1 (RQ1): Odnos između komunikacije usmjerene na podršku u kriznim situacijama i organizacije te protokola u kriznim situacijama.

Na razini kompozitnih varijabli (Tablica 2) utvrđena je snažna pozitivna povezanost između komunikacije usmjerene na podršku i organizacije te protokola u kriznim situacijama ($r = 0,719$, $p < 0,01$). Koeficijent determinacije ($r^2 = 0,517$) pokazuje da se približno 52 % varijance u percepcijama zaposlenika o organizaciji kriznoga odgovora i kriznih protokola može pripisati njihovoj povezanosti s komunikacijom usmjerenom na podršku. To upućuje na to da zaposlenici u ovome uzorku, koji percipiraju višu razinu komunikacije usmjerene na podršku u kriznim situacijama, ujedno imaju tendenciju izvještavati o većoj jasnoći, dostupnosti i razvijenosti kriznih protokola, čime se podupire Hipoteza 1 o povezanosti komunikacijskih praksi i organizacijske pripremljenosti.

Tablica 2

U Tablici 3 prikazane su najznačajnije povezanosti između pojedinačnih čestica ove dvije podskale.

Tablica 3

Rezultati prikazani u Tablici 3 pokazuju nekoliko obrazaca koji su u skladu s teorijskim pretpostavkama. Najjače povezanosti ($r > 0,60$) uočene su između unaprijed definiranih načina informiranja roditelja i javnosti te internih mehanizama podrške, kao i između pristupa osposobljavanjima i resursima te dostupnosti stručne pomoći. Takvi nalazi upućuju na to da su vanjski komunikacijski kanali i interni sustavi podrške usko međusobno povezani. Umjerene do snažne povezanosti ($r = 0,45-0,56$) utvrđene su između dostupnosti protokola, postupaka za podršku zaposlenicima i posvećenosti mentalnom zdravlju, što ukazuje na to da formalne krizne strukture korespondiraju s psihosocijalnim sustavima podrške.

Hipoteza 2 (RQ2): Odnos između komunikacije usmjerene na podršku u kriznim situacijama i samoprocjene zaposlenika o spremnosti djelovanja u kriznim situacijama

Rezultati u Tablici 4 pokazuju snažnu pozitivnu povezanost između komunikacije usmjerene na podršku u kriznim situacijama i samoprocjene zaposlenika o spremnosti djelovanja u kriznim situacijama, ($r = 0,591$; $p < 0,01$). Koeficijent determinacije ($r^2 = 0,349$) pokazuje da se otprilike 35 % varijance u samoprocijenjenoj pripremljenosti zaposlenika za djelovanje u kriznim situacijama može pripisati njihovoj povezanosti s komunikacijom usmjerenom na podršku u kriznim situacijama. U školama u kojima zaposlenici u većoj mjeri percipiraju da ih škola informira, osnažuje i podržava, oni imaju tendenciju izvještavati o višim razinama percipirane kompetentnosti, jasnoće uloga i povjerenja u vlastitu sposobnost reagiranja, čime se potvrđuje hipoteza 2 o povezanosti komunikacije usmjerene na podršku u kriznim situacijama i samoprocjenom zaposlenika o spremnosti djelovanja u kriznim situacijama.

Tablica 4

U Tablici 5 prikazane su najznačajnije povezanosti između pojedinačnih čestica ovih dviju poskala.

Tablica 5

Rezultati (Tablica 5) upućuju na ključne obrasce u odnosu između komunikacije usmjerene na podršku u kriznim situacijama i *Samoprocjena zaposlenika o spremnosti djelovanja u kriznim situacijama*. Najjače povezanosti ($r > 0,55$) uočene su između pristupa osposobljavanjima i resursima, s jedne strane, te dostupnosti stručne podrške i komunikacijske spremnosti, s druge strane. Ovakav obrazac sugerira da je kontinuirani profesionalni razvoj povezan s praktičnim kapacitetima za reagiranje u kriznim situacijama. Umjerene povezanosti ($r = 0,45-0,51$) između krizne pripremljenosti, brige za mentalno zdravlje i dostupnosti stručne podrške ukazuju na to da psihološka otpornost i tehnička pripremljenost mogu djelovati sinergijski.

Hipoteza 3 (RQ3): Odnos između komunikacije usmjerene na podršku u kriznim situacijama i dosljednosti primjene i nadzora sigurnosnih mjera u školi

Analiza rezultata u Tablici 6 također je pokazala umjereno snažnu pozitivnu povezanost između komunikacije usmjerene na podršku u kriznim situacijama i konzistentnosti provedbe i praćenja sigurnosnih mjera u školama ($r = 0,565$; $p < 0,01$). Koeficijent determinacije ($r^2 = 0,319$) pokazuje da se približno 32 % varijance u konzistentnosti provedbe i praćenja sigurnosnih mjera može pripisati njihovoj povezanosti s podržavajućim kriznim komuniciranjem. Zaposlenici u školama u kojima percipiraju višu razinu podržavajuće i pravodobne komunikacije istodobno imaju tendenciju procjenjivati da se sigurnosne mjere provode konzistentnije te da su protokoli jasniji i bolje praćeni, što je u skladu s hipotezom 3 o povezanosti komunikacijskih procesa i operativne provedbe sigurnosnih postupaka.

Tablica 6

Tablica 7 prikazuje najznačajnije korelacije između pojedinačnih čestica ovih dviju podskala.

Tablica 7

Tablica 7 pokazuje konzistentne obrasce koji povezuju komunikaciju usmjerenu na pružanje podrške u školi s konzistentnošću sigurnosnih mjera. Najsnažnija povezanost ($r = 0,606$) vidljiva je između pristupa osposobljavanjima, resursima i podršci za jačanje komunikacijskih vještina i psihološke otpornosti te dostupnosti stručne pomoći za zaposlenike, što upućuje na postojanje dobro razvijene institucionalne infrastrukture podrške. Umjerene korelacije ($r \approx 0,44-0,51$) između osviještenosti važnosti sigurnosnih mjera, mehanizama za praćenje njihove provedbe, brige za mentalno zdravlje i dostupnosti stručne podrške sugeriraju da je sigurnosna kultura u školama istodobno povezana s proceduralnom usklađenošću i dobiti zaposlenika.

Diskusija

Rezultati dobiveni na prvo istraživačko pitanje idu u prilog hipotezi 1, prema kojoj postoji značajna pozitivna povezanost između komunikacije usmjerene na podršku u kriznim situacijama te organizacije i protokola u kriznim situacijama (Tablica 2, Tablica 3). Uzorak Pearsonovih koeficijenata korelacije sugerira da su temeljna komunikacijska i organizacijska načela te jasni protokoli, u kombinaciji s edukacijama i međusobnom suradnjom, povezani s time da se zaposlenici osjećaju osnaženo i bolje pripremljeno za krizne situacije. Strukturirani i formalno definirani protokoli kriznoga upravljanja uključuju jasno određene ciljeve, mjere za sprječavanje opasnosti i potencijalnih kriza, postupke za ublažavanje i saniranje posljedica te mehanizme oporavka putem kojih se škola vraća u stanje prije krize, uz iskustveno učenje za buduće situacije. Sastavni dio takvih protokola najčešće obuhvaća uspostavu kriznoga tima, raspodjelu uloga učiteljima, stručnim suradnicima, roditeljima i administrativnom osoblju, njihovu kontinuiranu edukaciju te koordinaciju svih aktivnosti. Osim navedenoga, učinkovita provedba protokola također ovisi o kvalitetnoj suradnji s roditeljima, lokalnom zajednicom i relevantnim institucijama. Uspješna provedba često se dovodi u vezu s kvalitetom školskoga vodstva, koordinacijom svih uključenih dionika, redovitom edukacijom učitelja i ostalih zaposlenika, stvaranjem pozitivne školske klime koja potiče suradnju i etično ponašanje te osiguravanjem dostatnih materijalnih i ljudskih resursa (Karasavidou i Alexopoulos, 2019). Sve navedeno u skladu je s dobivenim rezultatima koji upućuju na važnost integriranoga pristupa kriznim situacijama u školama, pri čemu se učinkoviti komunikacijski kanali, jasno definirani protokoli i dostupni stručni resursi percipiraju važnom poveznicom za sigurnost zaposlenika i njihovom psihološkom otpornošću.

Analiza rezultata dobivenih za drugo istraživačko pitanje potvrđuje hipoteza 2, prema kojoj postoji značajna pozitivna povezanost između komunikacije usmjerene na podršku u kriznim situacijama i samoprocijenjene spremnosti zaposlenika za postupanje u kriznim situacijama. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju relativno visoku korelaciju ($r = 0,591$) i upućuju na snažnu pozitivnu povezanost između komunikacije usmjerene na podršku u kriznim situacijama i spremnosti zaposlenika. Time se dodatno naglašava uloga školskoga vodstva. Iz menadžerske perspektive, rezultati sugeriraju da je formaliziranje jasnih komunikacijskih kanala (uključujući postupke informiranja roditelja i šire javnosti) povezano sa snažnijom percepcijom prema spremnosti provedbe protokola i pripremljenosti zaposlenika. U ovome istraživanju, percepcije zaposlenika pokazuju da je pristup edukacijama, resursima i stručnoj podršci usko povezan i s organizacijom vezanom uz protokole i sa spremnosti zaposlenika za postupanje u kriznim situacijama. Unatoč tome što se iz korelacijskoga nacрта ne mogu utvrditi uzročni zaključci, tako zaokružen obrazac povezanosti može dati smjernice za smanjenje profesionalnoga sagorijevanja te jačanje percepcije o sigurnosti i učinkovitosti među školskim zaposlenicima.

Analiza rezultata (Tablica 6) pokazuje umjereno snažnu pozitivnu korelaciju ($r = 0,565$) između komunikacije usmjerene na podršku u kriznim situacijama i dosljednosti provedbe i praćenja sigurnosnih mjera u školama, čime se potvrđuje hipoteza 3, da postoji statistički značajna povezanost između komunikacije usmjerene na podršku u kriznim situacijama i dosljednosti primjene i nadzora sigurnosnih mjera u školi. Dobiveni rezultati naglašavaju važnost implementacije krizne komunikacije u svakodnevne organizacijske rutine, umjesto da se na nju gleda kao na ad hoc aktivnost. Rezultati upućuju na to da je sigurnost u školama konceptualizirana kao višedimenzionalan sustav koji obuhvaća institucionalne resurse, edukaciju, superviziju i psihosocijalnu podršku zaposlenicima. Snažne korelacije između pristupa edukacijama i percepcija prema dostupnoj stručnoj pomoći upućuju na potencijalnu sinergiju profesionalnoga razvoja i psihološke podrške. Nadalje, uočene povezanosti između kontrolnih mehanizama, osviještenosti o važnosti sigurnosnih mjera i pokazatelja vezanih uz smanjenje stresa i jačanje mentalnoga zdravlja sugeriraju da sigurno školsko okruženje obuhvaća emocionalne i organizacijske dimenzije otpornosti.

Ograničenja istraživanja

Pri tumačenju nalaza važno je uzeti u obzir nekoliko ograničenja ovoga istraživanja. Uporabljen je prigodan uzorak, prikupljen metodom „snježne grude” u jednoj hrvatskoj regiji, što povećava rizik pristranosti i ograničava mogućnost generalizacije rezultata na sve škole u Hrvatskoj. Nadalje, svi su podatci prikupljeni u jednome vremenskom presjeku, što povećava rizik zajedničke metodne varijance i ne dopušta donošenje zaključaka o uzročnim odnosima. Zajedno uzevši, ova ograničenja upućuju na potrebu opreznoga tumačenja nalaza i suzdržanosti pri generalizaciji rezultata izvan konteksta istočne Hrvatske. Osim toga, istraživanje je smješteno u specifičan nacionalni i regionalni kontekst te ne uključuje kulturološke usporedbe s drugim obrazovnim sustavima ili modelima kriznoga upravljanja. Stoga bi buduća istraživanja trebala ispitati školsko krizno komuniciranje i provedbu protokola u komparativnim i kulturološki utemeljenim istraživačkim okvirima, kako bi se procijenila primjenjivost ovih nalaza u različitim kulturnim i institucionalnim okruženjima.

Menadžerske implikacije

Ove implikacije izravno su izvedene iz uočenih povezanosti između komunikacije usmjerene na pružanje podrške, spremnosti protokola, pripremljenosti zaposlenika i konzistentnosti sigurnosnih mjera. Školski rukovoditelji (ravnatelji) mogu ojačati pripravnost na krize formaliziranjem komunikacijskih kanala za ključne dionike (zaposlenike, roditelje i javnost) te osiguravanjem da krizni protokoli budu lako dostupni i redovito ažurirani. Kontinuirana osposobljavanja, resursi i strukturirane usluge stručne podrške čini se da su usko povezani sa snažnijom percepcijom spremnosti protokola i pripremljenosti zaposlenika. Uspostava ili osnaživanje školskoga tima za sigurnost ili kriznoga tima može operacionalizirati ove mjere i poboljšati koordinaciju

tijekom izvanrednih situacija. Uz mjere usmjerene na zaposlenike, škole bi trebale uzeti u obzir i to kako kulturne vrijednosti, očekivanja zajednice i uključenost obitelji oblikuju komunikacijske norme i povjerenje dionika tijekom kriza te sukladno tomu prilagoditi strategije kriznoga komuniciranja. Budući programi mogli bi sustavnije uključivati roditelje, lokalnu zajednicu i relevantne institucije u planiranje i uvježbavanje kriznih protokola, kao i prilagođavati komunikacijske strategije specifičnim kulturnim i društvenim obilježjima lokalnoga konteksta.

Zaključak

Obrazovni sustav Republike Hrvatske utemeljen je na jasno definiranom pravnom i zakonodavnom okviru. Rezultati ovoga istraživanja, provedenoga na prigodnom uzorku škola u istočnoj Hrvatskoj, pokazuju da učitelji i drugi školski djelatnici iskazuju relativno visoku razinu procijenjene spremnosti za djelovanje u kriznim situacijama. Dobiveni nalazi potvrđuju hipoteze Hipoteza 1, Hipoteza 2 i Hipoteza 3 te upućuju na potrebu daljnega ispitivanja učinaka strukturiranih intervencijskih programa usmjerenih na jačanje kapaciteta škola za upravljanje krizama putem jasno definiranih politika i sustavne stručne edukacije. Rezultati istraživanja također pokazuju značajne povezanosti između krizne komunikacije, organizacije kriznoga odgovora, sigurnosnih protokola, spremnosti zaposlenika i provedbe sigurnosnih mjera. Te povezanosti ukazuju na potrebu za integriranim politikama koje povezuju stručni razvoj, organizacijske strukture i psihosocijalnu podršku radi jačanja otpornosti odgojnoobrazovnih ustanova na krizne situacije. Takva strategija predstavlja važan čimbenik u prevenciji profesionalnoga sagorijevanja i unaprjeđenju upravljanja krizama, uz istodobni doprinos sustavnom jačanju sigurnosti unutar obrazovnoga sustava. Ulaganje u edukaciju i jasno strukturiranje školskih kriznih timova izravno pridonosi boljoj organizacijskoj sposobnosti i većem samopouzdanju zaposlenika u kriznim situacijama.