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CRISIS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: PERCEPTIONS AND STRATEGIES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

GESTÃO DE CRISES E CONFLITOS: PERCEPÇÕES E
ESTRATÉGIAS DE DIRETORES ESCOLARES

GESTIÓN DE CRISIS Y CONFLICTOS: PERCEPCIONES Y
ESTRATEGIAS DE DIRECTORES ESCOLARES

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ABSTRACT: This study analyzed how school administrators deal with crises and conflicts, considering the dimensions of school management, triggering factors, crisis management plans, and suggestions for addressing such issues. The research, conducted with a qualitative approach, employed semi-structured interviews with seven principals—four women and three men—and content analysis was carried out using the software webQDA (Neri de Souza et al., 2016). The study is primarily grounded in the works of Lück (2009; 2015), Paro (2015; 2018), and Libâneo (2018) regarding school management; Imberón (2010) and Nóvoa (2009; 2017) concerning continuing education; and Özgür (2018), Stoten (2021), and Tokel (2018) regarding crisis and conflict management in schools. The results highlighted both similarities and differences in the perceptions of male and female administrators. Female principals emphasized pedagogical management and team supervision, while male principals stressed communication and also team supervision. For female administrators, the main triggering factors were the lack of participation in crisis committees, communication problems, and internal conflicts; for male administrators, the key issues were the lack of specific training and internal conflicts. The study concludes that it is essential to invest in effective communication and continuing education to adequately prepare educators for managing crises and conflicts within the school environment.

KEYWORDS: School Management; Crises and Conflicts; Continuing Education; Educational Leadership.

RESUMO: Este estudo analisou como gestores escolares lidam com crises e conflitos, considerando as dimensões gestão escolar, fatores desencadeadores, planos de gestão e sugestões para enfrentamento. A pesquisa, de abordagem qualitativa, utilizou entrevistas semiestruturadas com sete diretores, sendo quatro mulheres e três homens, com análise de conteúdo realizada por meio do software webQDA (Neri de Souza et al, 2016). A pesquisa está fundamentada principalmente em Lück (2009; 2015), Paro (2015; 2018), Libâneo (2018) quanto à gestão escolar; Imbernón (2010), Nóvoa (2009; 2017) sobre a formação continuada Özgür (2018), Stoten (2021) e Tokel (2018) sobre a gestão de crises e conflitos em escolas. sobre a gestão de crises e conflitos em escolas. Os resultados destacaram similaridades nas percepções de gestoras e gestores, além de diferenças: gestoras enfatizaram a gestão pedagógica e a supervisão de equipes, enquanto gestores destacaram a comunicação e também a supervisão de equipes. Para as gestoras, os principais fatores desencadeadores foram a falta de participação em comitês de crises, problemas de comunicação e conflitos internos; para os gestores, a falta de formação específica e conflitos internos. Conclui-se que é necessário investir na comunicação eficaz e na formação continuada para preparar os educadores no enfrentamento adequado de crises e conflitos no ambiente escolar.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Gestão escolar; Crises e Conflitos; Formação Continuada; Liderança Educacional.

RESUMEN: Este estudio analizó cómo los gestores escolares enfrentan crisis y conflictos, considerando las dimensiones de gestión escolar, factores desencadenantes, planes de gestión y sugerencias para su abordaje. La investigación, de enfoque cualitativo, utilizó entrevistas semiestructuradas con siete directores —cuatro mujeres y tres hombres—, y el análisis de contenido fue realizado mediante el software webQDA (Neri de Souza et al., 2016). El estudio se fundamenta principalmente en Lück (2009; 2015), Paro (2015; 2018) y Libâneo (2018) en lo que respecta a la gestión escolar; Imbernón (2010) y Nóvoa (2009; 2017) sobre la formación continua; y Özgür (2018), Stoten (2021) y Tokel (2018) sobre la gestión de crisis y conflictos en escuelas. Los resultados destacaron similitudes en las percepciones de las gestoras y los gestores, así como algunas diferencias: las gestoras enfatizaron la gestión pedagógica y la supervisión de equipos, mientras que los gestores destacaron la comunicación y también la supervisión de equipos. Para las gestoras, los principales factores desencadenantes fueron la falta de participación en comités de crisis, problemas de comunicación y conflictos internos; para los gestores, la falta de formación específica y los conflictos internos. Se concluye que es necesario invertir en una comunicación eficaz y en la formación continua para preparar adecuadamente a los educadores en el manejo de crisis y conflictos en el entorno escolar.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Gestión escolar; Crisis y Conflictos; Formación Continua; Liderazgo Educativo.

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INTRODUCTION

Crises and conflicts within the school environment are increasingly emerging as significant challenges for educational management. These situations are not limited to extreme cases—everyday demands, which are becoming more and more complex, also require the school team to possess competencies that go beyond teaching. Crisis and conflict management can permeate the various spheres of the school principal's responsibilities, making it essential to have a deep understanding of the school's reality and adequate preparation to deal with such situations.

Contemporary school management faces a scenario of growing complexity, marked by diverse social demands, cultural transformations, and increasingly intense educational challenges. These challenges range from internal conflicts within the school community to external issues involving the school's surrounding environment. Such a context requires adaptive leadership capable of mediating tensions and fostering institutional resilience (Fernandes et al., 2023). In addition to traditional pedagogical and administrative responsibilities, principals must also manage crises and conflicts that demand specific technical and interpersonal skills.

The concept of school management emerged in the 1980s, following the enactment of the 1988 Federal Constitution (Brazil, 1988). However, it was only in the 1990s that a paradigm shift from an administrative approach to a more participatory dimension intensified (Lück, 2015). According to the author, the term *management* encompasses "a new understanding of the educational organization and its processes, and beyond that, the relationships between education and society and among individuals within the educational system and the school" (Lück, 2015, p. 53).

Based on this evolving concept of school management, new challenges arise that require the active participation of stakeholders in institutional decision-making. This process is complex and presupposes the mobilization of energy and human talent across all segments of educational systems and schools in general (Lück, 2015). The ability to listen, share decisions, and decentralize power becomes essential.

This research is justified by the increase in crises and conflicts within the school environment, which demand more qualified and context-sensitive responses from school management. As Lück (2015) states, the complexity of organizations today does not allow for a purely scientific administrative organization, which traditionally offers rigid, top-down solutions. With the democratization driven by the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (Brazil, 1996), there was an increase in student enrollment, leading to expanded school access. This expansion has been accompanied by growing demands related to behavior, emotional aspects, inclusion, and other emerging issues. Compounding this are the weaknesses

of current training practices, which often fail to adequately address these challenges, leaving school principals feeling unprepared to deal with such situations.

This study aims to analyze school principals' perceptions regarding aspects of crisis and conflict management in schools. The research problem centers on identifying the main needs reported by the interviewed principals in relation to the prevention and resolution of crisis and conflict situations within the school environment. The study adopts a qualitative approach, combining a literature review with field research through semi-structured interviews. The interview results, supported by theoretical studies, led to the creation of five categories of analysis: school management, triggering factors of crises and conflicts, intervention strategies, crisis management plans, and suggestions for improving the preparation of school principals.

The article is organized into sections that address the challenges of school management in mediating crises and conflicts, the methodological approach of the research, the presentation and discussion of results, as well as the conclusions and references.

Challenges and Actions of School Management in Mediating Crises and Conflicts

According to Ribeiro (2017), the school is inherently a space where conflicts arise due to aggressive impulses and the constant transformations present in society. In the context presented by the author, aggressive impulses do not necessarily refer to acts of physical violence but rather to natural disagreements and oppositional processes, which often emerge during adolescence, when students begin to question authority figures such as teachers and principals. Such conflicts are expected in a school that fulfills its formative role in guiding students toward autonomy and self-affirmation. Therefore, it is essential that school management knows how to receive and mediate these situations with understanding and balance.

Damaceno Filho and Darius (2024) highlight essential dimensions for crisis and conflict management in the school context, which include: effective communication and information, in-service training, strategy development, inclusive and democratic leadership, and resilience. According to the authors, these areas should be the focus of management actions, both in terms of prevention and in responding to critical situations.

Özgür (2018) adds that, in times of crisis, the effectiveness of school management is defined by a coordinated and transparent response to such situations. Soares (2017) reinforces that monitoring the right to education involves not only assessing academic outcomes but also understanding the social conditions that affect the quality of teaching and student development. This underscores the need to contextualize crises within the institutional reality, as only then will it be possible to address them effectively.

McNamara (2016) highlights the heroic dimension of school leaders who, despite limited resources and intense social pressures, demonstrate resilience and commitment to

providing a quality educational environment. Vieira and Vidal (2019) emphasize that people management is central to maintaining a positive organizational climate and ensuring educational success. Thus, the interrelation between understanding the social causes of conflicts, being prepared for effective responses, and exhibiting resilient and motivating leadership is essential for school management that promotes a healthy and productive learning environment.

Although, from a participatory perspective, the structure of the school is composed of the management team, it is worth emphasizing that the school principal plays a vital role in the development and success of the educational community, due to the authority inherent in the position. However, this authority is legitimized by the principal's knowledge and conduct in managing the situations and processes under their coordination. Responsible for dealing with the tensions between administrative actions and the objectives set out in the school's political-pedagogical project, the principal serves as a mediator among the various spheres that make up the school environment and, therefore, exerts influence over the entire school community. As Paro (2015) states, school leadership is administration endowed with the authority required to ultimately assume responsibility for the institution.

In-Service Training of School Principals

Continuing education, as defined by law, can take place both in the workplace and in educational institutions, encompassing a variety of courses (Brazil, 2013). Gatti (2008) emphasizes that continuing education is a process aimed at professional development throughout an educator's career, enabling constant updates and critical reflection on pedagogical practices—an essential component in improving the quality of education. In-service training, according to Geglio (2010), is a "type of training that takes place in the actual workplace ..., in the school" (p. 113), a space that fosters continuous and contextualized actions, with the pedagogical coordinator playing a crucial mediating role. The author explains that in-service training is, in his view, a subset of continuing education, though he acknowledges that different interpretations of these terms exist.

For Nóvoa (2017), continuing education constitutes a means of professional improvement for educators, aiming to enhance educational processes. This type of training should encompass both theory and practice, with the goal of shaping reflective professionals whose practices are the core focus of the process. It can be asserted that continuing education seeks to foster improvement in both educational processes and the professional development of educators, grounded in theoretical knowledge and anchored in real-life situations that arise in school practice. This approach to training enables experience, reflection, and practical engagement in the school context, assessing professionals' ability to convey knowledge and competencies in everyday school life.

According to Pont et al. (2008), the continuous training and development of school leaders are essential to meet the contemporary demands of education. While many school principals come from teaching backgrounds, the skills required for effective leadership—especially in the areas of teaching and learning, resource management, and inter-institutional coordination—are not typically acquired through classroom experience alone. Leading a classroom, coordinating a team of teachers, managing a school unit, or operating within educational systems demands distinct skill sets that do not develop spontaneously, requiring an intentional and structured training process.

Thus, Pont et al. (2008) argue that leadership development should be seen as a continuous and diverse process, integrating both formal and informal programs, including mentoring, experiential learning, peer support, and professional networks, among others. These initiatives are crucial for enhancing the competencies of school leaders and positively impacting educational practice and institutional performance.

Continuing Education for Teachers and School Principals

Imbernón (2010) highlights the need to seek new perspectives in continuing education, particularly in the context of teacher training, stressing the importance of developing a formative culture that dynamically combines theoretical and practical processes. Although his primary focus is on teacher education, many of the principles he discusses can be applied to the training of school leaders. The transition from teaching to leadership roles requires the adaptation of these ideas, with an emphasis on collaborative practices, emotional processes, and the development of reflective self-formation. The integration of the school community and teamwork are other key strategies to strengthen the role of school leaders, promoting continuing education that is more responsive to the everyday demands of school life.

Thus, these elements become crucial to ensure that the training of school leaders is not merely a technical update focused on procedural aspects—although these are also important and necessary—but also directed toward the management of the institution's political-pedagogical project. Such training initiatives must equip them to deal with the complex challenges of educational leadership, which requires attention to all dimensions of schoolwork.

In the debate on teacher education, scholars such as Gatti et al. (2019) highlight essential elements for teaching, such as knowledge of the student and their contexts, understanding the relationship between language, learning, and cognitive and social development, and mastery of the pedagogical content of the subjects to be taught. When adapting these principles to the reality of school leadership, we can envision continuing education that includes aspects of pedagogical leadership, support for teachers, communication, and relationships among

peers and with students—elements that are essential for a school management dynamic that is both flexible and engaged with educational practice.

Imbernón (2010) identifies three main areas of action for educator training: practical-theoretical reflection, peer experience exchange, and the development of a real work project. In the case of school leaders, the practical application of this knowledge should also include leadership in conflict situations, human resource management, and engagement with the school community.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This study was conducted between 2023 and 2024 and is part of a research project carried out within the scope of the Professional Master's Program in Education at UNASP, entitled *Gestão de Crises e Conflitos: dimensões essenciais para o trabalho do gestor escolar* (*Crisis and Conflict Management: Essential Dimensions for the Work of School Principals*). The study was approved by the Ethics Committee, as per Opinion No. 6.332.809. This research adopts a qualitative approach, focusing on the perceptions of school principals regarding crisis and conflict management in private schools. Seven school principals, ranging in age from 30 to 70 years, participated in the study, including four women and three men. The participants' professional experience in school management varied from 3 to 38 years, and their academic backgrounds were diverse, including degrees in Pedagogy, Administration, Theology, and Production Engineering. They also held a variety of professional roles prior to taking on leadership positions.

Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews, developed based on Gil's (2021) guidelines. This format allowed for a balance between directed questions and flexibility for participants to express their views openly and reflectively. The interviews were conducted remotely via the Zoom platform and lasted an average of 30 minutes each. The questions were previously validated by three experts in educational management. The qualitative analysis software webQDA (Neri de Souza et al., 2016) was used to assist in organizing the collected data.

The data analysis followed a qualitative content analysis approach inspired by Bardin's (2020) research. The transcribed data underwent a preanalysis phase, during which they were organized to facilitate further exploration. In the material exploration phase, the interview transcripts were examined, and from this analysis, categories were created based on the main themes of the interviews. At this stage, webQDA software was employed to identify and classify lexical units. The final phase of the analysis consisted of processing, inference, and interpretation of the data. This stage focused on interpreting the connections between emerging themes and selecting the most relevant matrices (charts) generated by the software.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE DATA

As shown in Table 1, the categorization of the data encompassed the main categories of analysis, such as School Management, Triggering Factors of Crises and Conflicts, Intervention Strategies, Crisis Management Plans, and Suggestions for Improvement in Training. The secondary categories are related to the main ones, and it is important to note that both were derived from the interview data.

Table 1: Categories of Analysis

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT
TRIGGERING FACTORS OF CRISES AND CONFLICTS
INTERVENTION STRATEGIES
CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLANS
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING PREPARATION

Source: developed by the authors with the support of webQDA.

These categories will be explored in Chart 1 to 4, as a sample of the data collected and analyzed in the aforementioned Master's research.

Figure 1, a word cloud generated from interviews with school leaders, highlights the most frequently mentioned terms, emphasizing essential aspects of school management. *Crises* (88 mentions) and *people* (39 mentions) underscore the challenges faced and the importance of interpersonal relationships, while *team* (38 mentions) and *management* (35 mentions) emphasize the need for collaborative work and strategic leadership. *Communication* (29 mentions) emerges as a key factor in minimizing conflicts and promoting dialogue among teachers, students, and parents. *Training* (33 mentions) reinforces the need for continuous professional development to improve school management and safety. The word *parents* (31 mentions) reflects the relevance of community involvement, particularly in critical situations. Additionally, the presence of terms such as *planning* and *safety* highlights the importance of both preventive and responsive approaches, ensuring that schools are equipped to face adversity with effectiveness and resilience.

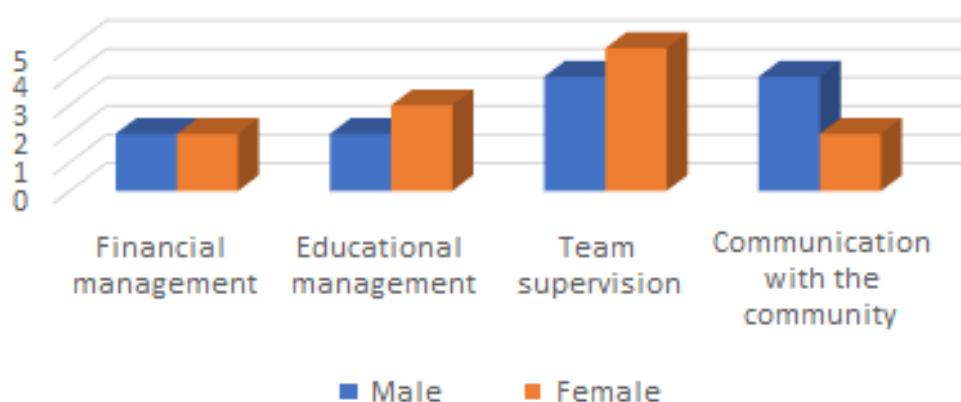
Figure 1: Word cloud generated from the interviews



Source: created by the author with the support of webQDA.

The following charts will address the dimensions of school management, the triggering factors of crises, the strategies, crisis management plans, and suggestions for improvement. These categories are associated with participants' characteristics, such as gender, age group, years of service, and previous professional experience.

Chart 1: Relationship Between the Perception of School Management Dimensions and the Gender of the Interviewees



Source: Produced by the authors with the support of webQDA.

Chart 1, titled Relationship Between the Perception of School Management Dimensions and the Gender of the Interviewees, reveals nuances regarding the areas of action of school managers according to their gender. In the area of Financial Administration, there is an equal

distribution between male and female managers, with two mentions each. This suggests a moderate concern with financial control and budget planning within schools, possibly because these institutions encourage involvement in financial management, developing skills that facilitate leadership in this area once management positions are assumed:

“My role in financial management requires strict resource control to ensure institutional stability, especially in large-scale contexts” (Manager 5).

This observation is supported by the analyses of Pont et al. (2008) and Lück (2009), who emphasize the importance of efficient resource administration as an essential component for ensuring the stability of educational institutions. It can be inferred that this dimension may receive less attention from school leadership, which tends to prioritize pedagogical areas and supervision focused on academic performance and school well-being. As a result, financial administration is often viewed as a supportive function, secondary to the school's main objective, which is to educate and form citizens.

However, as pointed out by Pont et al. (2008) and Lück (2009), the sustainability and success of pedagogical initiatives also depend on a well-managed financial foundation, highlighting the importance of balance among different management areas. In Pedagogical Management, female managers stand out with three mentions, while male managers had two, which may reflect a more collaborative approach and a stronger inclination toward direct leadership of teams by women. Manager 1 illustrates this by stating:

“I oversee the school’s processes, planning, and training coordination. ... I offer continuous support to teachers and lead the team’s training to ensure pedagogical quality.”

Regarding Team Supervision, female managers had five mentions, while male managers had four, suggesting a concern among women with monitoring and supporting teams. Manager 3 notes:

“I take full leadership of the institution’s various sectors, ensuring operational and educational harmony at all levels. I am responsible for coordinating the team, managing both the human and pedagogical aspects of the school.”

Manager 1, in turn, emphasizes the challenge of leading the team:

“the great challenge is managing the entire team, especially in a large school where we have a significant number of staff members.”

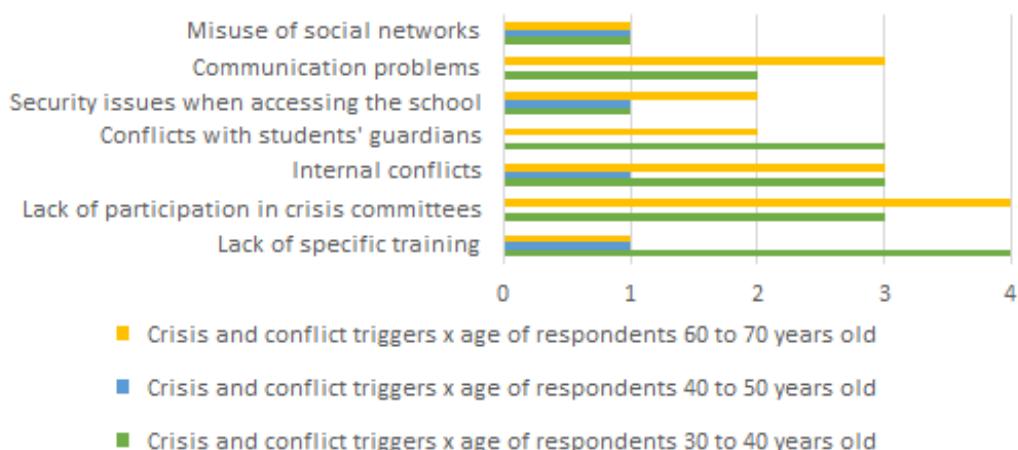
In the area of Communication with the Community, male managers accounted for four mentions, indicating a greater focus on this area, while female managers made two such remarks. These differences suggest management styles that vary by gender, with women prioritizing Pedagogical Management and Team Supervision, while men emphasize Communication with the Community and Team Supervision as key school management functions. Manager 3 exemplifies this approach by stating:

“focusing on communication ... has been crucial to aligning expectations and addressing issues more transparently, while also ensuring strict control of the institution’s financial resources.”

Communication in the school environment is essential for addressing crises and maintaining a healthy organizational climate. According to Damaceno Filho and Darius (2024), effective communication, combined with democratic strategies, strengthens collective action in the face of complex challenges. The authors emphasize that communication skills do not arise spontaneously; they require continuous training and exchanges within the school team. Such preparation fosters the circulation of information and the construction of solutions aligned with the needs of the educational community. Communication must go beyond the technical aspect, incorporating empathy, active listening, and clarity.

We know that the triggering factors of crises and conflicts in the school environment can be diverse, stemming from both external and internal problems. Chart 2 addresses the perceptions of male and female managers regarding this aspect in relation to the participants' age groups.

Chart 2: Relationship Between the Triggering Factors of Crises and Conflicts in School Management and the Age Group of the Interviewees



Source: produced by the author with the support of webQDA.

As shown in Chart 2, more experienced managers, aged between 60 and 70, mentioned the lack of participation in crisis committees in four instances, suggesting a perceived need for greater inclusion in strategic decision-making and crisis management actions. Additionally, this group also highlighted both communication problems and internal conflicts, with three mentions each, indicating a significant concern with interpersonal relationship management and communication clarity within the school—fundamental aspects for the effective functioning of the school environment.

These results may reflect the accumulation of practical knowledge and direct experience among older school managers, who, despite their comprehensive understanding of the school context, perceive that their expertise is undervalued in decision-making processes. This exclusion—especially during critical crisis moments—can lead to dissatisfaction and affect the efficiency of the strategies implemented.

Managers aged 40 to 50 mentioned several factors in a balanced way, with one reference for each secondary category, including *lack of specific training*, internal conflicts, school access security, misuse of social media, and communication problems. This balanced distribution suggests that, being in a phase of professional advancement and attuned to contemporary demands, these managers tend to be concerned with multiple aspects of school management, although perhaps without the same depth or consolidated vision as more experienced managers.

Younger managers, between the ages of 30 and 40, also appear focused on both structural and relational aspects. They emphasized a lack of specific training with four mentions, lack of participation in crisis committees with three mentions, and internal conflicts, school access security, and communication problems also with three mentions each. This pattern reflects the desire of these managers to assert themselves in their roles by developing the competencies needed to face the critical challenges of school management. Manager 6, who falls within the 30 to 40 age group, noted:

“Economic crises and the lack of government resources are the main triggering factors of conflicts in my school.”

Imbernón (2010), although not specifically addressing crisis and conflict management, argues that continuing education should focus on the problematic situations faced by teachers. By analogy, we can state that the ongoing training of school leaders, whether promoted by the management team itself or the maintenance body, should focus on the demands of their professional roles. Regarding this preparation, the managers reported:

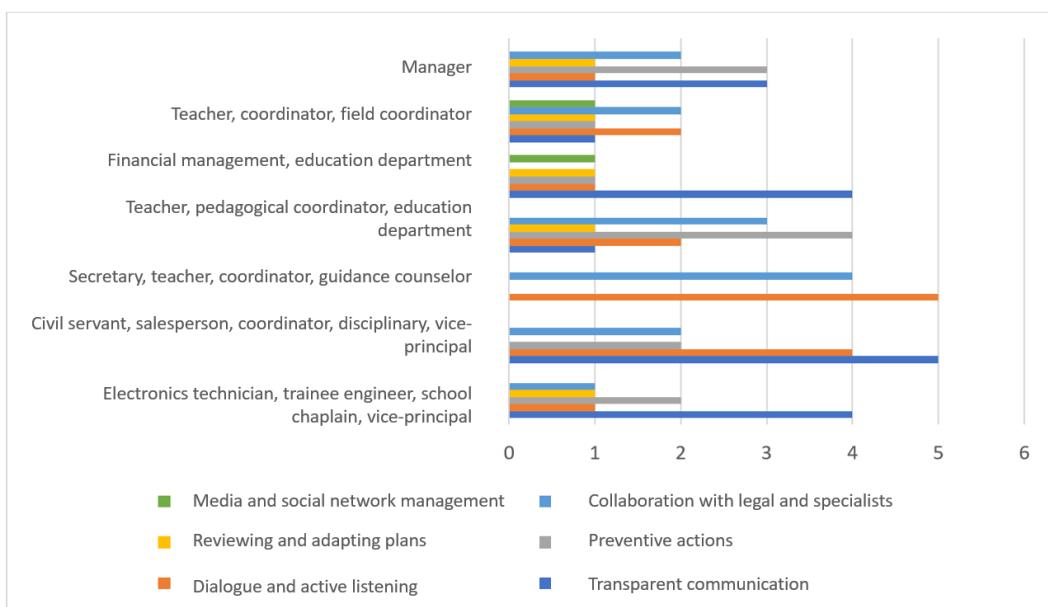
“As a principal, I did not participate in any specific training on school crisis management.” (Manager 5, aged between 40 and 50)

“So, we received some guidance for a specific situation. But before that—never, never had anything. It wasn’t really training.” (Manager 1, aged between 30 and 40)

*“but the most striking moments were during the pandemic and an attack in ***** Those were the first times we had to meet seriously and receive instructions. I don’t recall any training before those events.” (Manager 7, aged between 60 and 70)*

We perceive the complexity of dealing with such issues in the school environment, as the intense daily routine consumes much of the staff’s time and energy, leaving little room for reflection and preparation. While full preparation for unexpected situations is not entirely possible, studies indicate that *communication* and *planning* are key allies in addressing challenges. Despite the limitations imposed by reality, it is feasible to consider intervention strategies. Chart 3 presents the managers’ perceptions regarding such initiatives.

Chart 3: Relationship Between Intervention Strategies in School Management and the Previous Experiences of the Respondents



Source: produced by the author with the support of webQDA.

Chart 3, entitled “Relationship Between Intervention Strategies in School Management and the Previous Experiences of the Respondents,” highlights how professional backgrounds influence managers’ strategic choices in handling crises in the school environment. Regarding the use of dialogue and active listening, managers who previously held roles such as secretaries, teachers, coordinators, and advisors led with five mentions. This reflects an approach

centered on strengthening interpersonal relationships and mediating conflicts. Such practice reveals a leadership style that prioritizes building solid relationships as the foundation for effective crisis resolution. Manager 1, with extensive experience in the pedagogical field, exemplifies this approach:

“Focusing on dialogue and active listening is essential to resolving conflicts that arise in the classroom and among members of the school community. Without this balance, crises can escalate quickly.”

On the other hand, managers with backgrounds in financial management and administrative functions prioritize transparent communication, also with five mentions, emphasizing clarity and objectivity as essential tools for crisis management. This practice ensures that the team is well-informed and aligned, facilitating the organization of responses and operational efficiency. Manager 3 illustrates this approach:

“My priority is to ensure that financial and administrative processes function efficiently, which facilitates crisis management and maintains the school’s stability.”

Collaboration with legal advisors and specialists was another relevant aspect, particularly among secretaries, teachers, and coordinators, with four mentions. This approach highlights the emphasis placed on technical support and legal security during times of crisis. Manager 7, who has experience in both administrative and pedagogical areas, underscores the importance of integrating strategies:

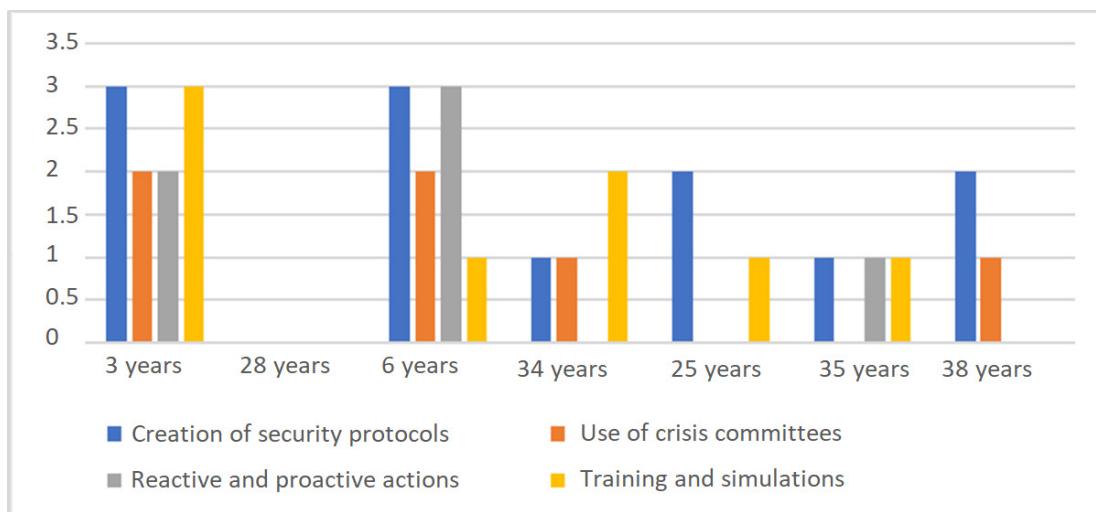
“My role encompasses both administrative and pedagogical responsibilities, which allows me to view crises from multiple perspectives and adjust strategies as needed.”

These data reveal that the diversity of professional experiences directly impacts the intervention strategies employed by school managers. Those with diverse backgrounds—including both pedagogical and administrative training—tend to adopt a more holistic and integrated approach, combining collaborative practices with a focus on operational outcomes. In contrast, managers with primarily administrative backgrounds tend to emphasize structured actions and operational processes to maintain efficiency and prevent crises.

This analysis of the chart leads us back to the ideas of Nôvoa (2009) and Imbernón (2010), who stress the importance of ongoing professional development and the combination of competencies to strengthen educators' ability to cope with everyday challenges. Lück (2009) adds that collaborative management, which integrates different areas of knowledge,

results in a more comprehensive and effective approach to crisis resolution. Libâneo (2018) and Pont et al. (2008) support this view, indicating that diverse experiences contribute to more balanced leadership, promoting efficient management in complex scenarios.

Chart 4: Relationship Between Crisis Management Plans and the Managers' Years of Experience



Source: produced by the author with the support of webQDA.

Chart 4 presents the relationship between crisis management plans and the school managers' years of service, showing that the creation of safety protocols was the most prominent strategy among participants, regardless of their time in the role. This aspect was strongly emphasized both by managers with only three years of experience and by those with 25 to 38 years, revealing a shared understanding of the need for clear and pre-established guidelines to address critical situations within the school environment. This finding reinforces the perception that, regardless of accumulated experience, the absence of formal protocols may undermine the management team's ability to respond to unexpected crises. As highlighted by the managers interviewed, regarding the creation of protocols, committees, and actions:

"I suggest a preventive approach and the creation of a crisis management manual, similar to one a friend from UFES in Espírito Santo showed me. It is crucial to have a detailed and practical plan that can be adapted as needs arise, ensuring that all bases are covered to face any unexpected situation." (Manager 7, 38 years of experience)

"We do not have a specific pre-established plan, as crises can vary greatly. However, the team always meets strategically to assess and scale the crisis, seeking solutions with legal support and planning to minimize the impacts." (Manager 7, 38 years of experience)

“It would be extremely helpful to place more emphasis on administrative meetings to discuss potential crises and explore practical solutions—not merely as a space for venting, but as proactive preparation.” (Manager 6, 35 years of experience)

The interviewed managers also proposed, based on their lived experiences and accumulated knowledge, strategies for improving the school environment, as illustrated in Chart 5.

Chart 5: Relationship Between Suggested Improvements in Training and Years of Experience of Respondents



Source: Produced by the author with the support of webQDA.

Chart 5, titled “Relationship Between Suggested Improvements in Training and the Respondents’ Years of Experience,” illustrates how professional experience influences school managers’ priorities regarding improvements in training for crisis management. Among managers with 3 years of experience, the creation of specific manuals and protocols was emphasized, with three mentions, reflecting a need for structured and clear guidelines. This initial focus demonstrates a search for security and established standards to guide actions during crises. Manager 2 exemplifies this concern:

“We are still establishing our crisis management processes, but we already have some guidelines we follow.”

This statement reflects the perspective of early-career managers who value the development of practical and preventive guides to inform their decision-making. For managers with 6 years of experience, the involvement of the entire team in crisis planning was highlighted, with two mentions, indicating a shift toward collaborative practices. This data suggests that, with more experience, managers begin to value a more integrated management approach, understanding the role of each team member in preparing and executing crisis plans.

Regarding team involvement, we can refer to Imbernón (2010, pp. 86–88), who suggests the creation of communities for the exchange of knowledge and experiences among peers. The author mentions “*communities of practice*” for experience sharing and “learning based on shared reflection”; “*formative communities*” that allow teachers to create their own culture “in which the community members themselves develop their conceptions and create their teaching and learning practices based on ... lived experiences and interactions”; and “*learning communities*,” whose goal is to enhance the learning and self-esteem of students and teachers through joint actions.

As for training, managers with 34 years of experience prioritize regular and preventive training, mentioned three times. For these professionals, years of accumulated experience reinforce the need for continuous, hands-on preparation and the importance of documentation to guide practice, ensuring more effective responses based on real situations. As exemplified by Manager 7:

“We’ve already faced several crises at the school. We have clear protocols that have been tested and adjusted over time.”

This appreciation for protocols aligns with André (2014), who emphasizes that the accumulated experience of education professionals reinforces the need for formal documentation and guidance, capable of orienting practice and ensuring more effective responses in critical contexts. Furthermore, Damaceno and Darius (2024) stress that the collective development of strategies, including protocol design, strengthens the school’s ability to face crises safely and efficiently, promoting coordinated action among all members of the school community.

RESULTS

Finally, the field research revealed various dimensions involved in handling/managing crises and conflicts in the school environment. We understand that effective communication is one of them, and it can be achieved through intentionality and professional preparation, encompassing all school processes, including continuing education and its outcomes, such as the creation of appropriate protocols, training sessions, notices to the school community, and more. As Imbernón (2010) argues, continuing education must address the problematic situations schools face—in other words, it should involve both preparation and action. Thus, the explored dimensions were: school management, factors that trigger crises and conflicts, intervention strategies, crisis management plans, and suggestions for improving professional training. These can also be analyzed in terms of their interrelations.

Imbernón (2010) proposes continuing education as essential for developing competencies in emotional leadership, conflict resolution, and adaptation to challenging scenarios. In

From this perspective, authors such as André (2014) and Lück (2009) suggest that continuing education should be designed not only to address the technical and structural challenges of school management but also to strengthen emotional skills. Reflective practice, as advocated by Nóvoa (2017), should be integrated into daily training routines, promoting a continuous cycle of learning and improvement. The findings, therefore, reinforce the need for educational policies that encourage ongoing training, addressing both technical and emotional competencies.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study aimed to analyze school managers' perceptions regarding aspects of crisis and conflict management within the school environment, taking into account variables such as gender, years of service, age group, educational background, and prior professional experience. The research was guided by the central question of identifying the main needs highlighted by the interviewed managers in addressing, preventing, and resolving crisis and conflict situations in the school context. Based on the results, it was possible to identify relevant aspects such as communication with the community and team supervision as key areas of managerial attention.

As intervention strategies for managing crises and conflicts, we highlight dialogue, active listening, and transparent communication. Regarding suggestions for improving professional training, the creation of safety protocols was emphasized to help managers feel more confident in their actions. Lastly, in terms of the factors triggering crises and conflicts, we note the lack of specific training to handle crisis-related situations, internal team conflicts, and challenges in relationships with students' families.

In light of these findings, it is understood that schools can promote continuous training for managers and staff, equipping them for effective conflict mediation. Creating spaces for dialogue with the community strengthens communication and organizational culture. Establishing clear and accessible protocols supports rapid and coordinated crisis responses. Partnerships with specialists can contribute to more secure and assertive strategies, provided they are designed within the specific context of the school under study and aligned with its reality.

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations: the sample was restricted to seven school managers from a specific region of Brazil, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Furthermore, the absence of longitudinal follow-up prevents an analysis of the long-term impacts of the proposed strategies. Therefore, we recommend that future research expand upon the approach developed here, exploring different school contexts and perspectives, and considering longitudinal studies and investigations that include the participation of other educational stakeholders—such as teachers, students, and families—in order to deepen the understanding of crisis and conflict management in educational settings.

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