

Are Sensation Seekers in Control?

A Study in Crisis Preparedness

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Abstract

Purpose

The study extends the research on crisis management (CM) at large and crisis preparedness (CP) in particular by integrating impulsive sensation-seeking (ImpSS) and locus of control (LoC) as predictors of CP. Further, we considered the role of leadership (transformational and transactional) styles and feminine attributes as forerunners of CP.

Design/methodology/approach

A total of 209 mid-level local gov't managers responded to surveys of leadership, gender, CM, ImpSS and LoC. Relationships were examined via hierarchical linear regression.

Findings

Findings support the notions that impulsive sensation-seekers typified by external locus of control are crisis-prone and that transformational leaders are crisis-prepared whereas transactional leaders are crisis-prone. Contrary to previous research, femininity was associated with crisis proneness rather than being conducive to CP.

Implications

Given the consequences of crisis proneness for organisations and managers, it is vital for organisations to inculcate the importance of CP with respect to managers' personal traits and leadership styles. Hence, senior -management must be mindful of the adverse repercussions of crises and notably the benefits of structured CP plans. Since transformational leadership is conducive to CP it should be emphasised as crucial for CP. Leaders should be cognizant of the need attenuate the adverse effects of ImpSS and external LoC in order to improve CP.

Originality/value

Our contribution to crisis research is the integration of LoC and ImpSS as antecedents of CP. These theoretical constructs have not been hitherto addressed as potentially important predictors of CP. Awareness as to these constructs will potentially improve CM mechanisms and specifically CP.

Keywords Crisis management, Crisis preparedness, Sensation-seeking, Locus of control, Leadership

Introduction

Recent upsurge in business failures and corporate crises thereof herald no letup in the acute need for effective CM. As business task environments become more complex and turbulent, crises are likely to increase in both prevalence and gravity (*cf.* Ringland, Sparrow & Lustig, 2010). For instance some 90,000 news accounts of business crises in the US alone were reported between 2000 and 2009 (Institute for Crisis Management, 2010). The 2000s began with the financial imbroglios of Tyco, Enron and WorldCom. The end of this decade has seen the collapse of Merrill Lynch and Lehman

Brothers. Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and Washington Mutual barely escaped dissolution. According to FDIC (2011) a total of 476 US banks failed between November 2000-May 2012 of which 19% collapsed in 2011 alone.

Increasingly prevalent and a flow of corporate failures, natural disasters and viral pandemics highlight how inadequately prepared organisations are in the wake of crises. Notwithstanding, less than 70% of U.S. corporations reported having crisis plans and teams (Lee, Woeste & Heath, 2007: 334; Crandall, Parnell & Spillan, 2010).

An organisational crisis is a low-probability, high-impact occurrence that jeopardises organisational survival and is typified by vagueness of cause, effect and means of resolution and by a belief that decisions must be made swiftly (Pearson & Clair, 1998: 60). Though events that trigger crises are unanticipated and their implications are abstruse, executives are still supposed to promote mechanisms enabling the identification of early warning signals (Sheaffer, Richardson & Rosenblatt, 1998), prevent the development of evolving problems, contain them if their progress cannot be discontinued, and then converge on bouncing back from resultant performance difficulties (Grant & Mack, 2004).

Regardless of whether crises are explained by the population ecology viewpoint, e.g. misfit between a specific type of organisation and its task environment (Lewin, Long & Carroll, 1999), or else by organisational stagnation and managerial inertia or poor strategic positioning (Greve, 2011), they invariably focus on any major impediment in the design and activities of the firm (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2008: 178).

In a quest for sustaining competitive advantage position, firms must possess a range of responses and preparatory mechanisms to warrant corporate viability under all probable circumstances. Hence, it is expected of top managers to be aware of and prepared for potentially disrupting occurrences liable to destabilise vital organisational processes (Hough & Spillan, 2005). Attention to these functions transpires during crises, when developing workable CM procedures is avowedly too late. Well before the current EU financial crisis, Pisani-Ferry & Sapir (2009: 2) argued that: *'It would certainly not be an overstatement to say that the European Union (EU) was institutionally ill-prepared to manage a financial crisis, especially one involving systemic crossborder institutions'*.

Notwithstanding the growing likelihood of crises, many organisations are still ill-prepared to effectively cope with such events (Melé & Sanchez-Runde, 2011). Evidently, whilst it appears impossible to forestall all problems and eventualities beforehand (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 1999), top managers are oftentimes caught out by predictable occurrences (Finkelstein, 2003). Business failures and crisis incur considerable costs most could be prevented or reduced appreciably had executives been more adequately prepared to effectively manage the resultant disruption (Mitroff & Alpaslan, 2003).

Recently, we have witnessed a growing stream of literature on various aspects of organisational crises, attesting to increased scholarly awareness as to the acute need for institutionalising effective CP. This awareness has yielded studies on wide-ranging aspects of CP, including unlearning failure as CP mechanism (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2008), managers' orientations as predictors of CP (Sheaffer & Man-Negrin, 2003), knowledge management in CM (Wang & 2009), and crisis readiness and strategic excellence (Lee et al., 2007) amongst others.

We highlight additional and hitherto only marginally addressed aspects of or antecedents to managerial CP or crisis proneness. Our research model posits impulsive ImpSS and LoC as forerunners of CP along with leadership styles and feminine traits. We explore how and why managers' impulsive sensation-seeking being an inherent human propensity, plays a role in managers' perception of how crises should be managed, and the extent to which they rationalise crises as inevitable or else manageable. Sensation-seeking has been studied in various disciplines including psychiatry, economic, social and cognitive psychology, medicine, criminology, and tourism research (Zuckerman, 2007). Likewise, many studies address various relationships between

managerial incompetence, slovenliness, haughtiness, myopia or hubris and crisis proneness (*cf.* Clark, 2011; Elliott, Smith & McGuinness, 2000) but no known work has thus far specifically examined executives' intrinsic ImpSS as a precursor of CP or crisis proneness. This, despite the fact that sensation-seeking is virtually a human trait that shapes individuals' perceptions and propensities vis-à-vis hazards (Schiff, 1977), inherent in ignoring or inadequately preparing for crises, else prompting crisis proneness. Similarly, the concept of LoC is a well-established research construct that though manifestly determines individual's attributional style (Russell, 1982), has not hitherto been directly linked to managerial CP or crisis-proneness. This lacuna seems surprising because we may intuitively presume that managers typified by internal LoC would be more likely to aspire for greater control over occurrences, hence willing to consciously shape their own as well as their firms' fate, notably under such dire circumstances as crisis. Contrastingly, managers characterised by external LoC would be innately subject to fatalism, expecting exogenous powers beyond their control to 'take care' of things.

Our model also includes feminine attributes, transformational and transactional leadership. Feminine attributes have been found in recent studies to be positively associated with effective CM (*cf.* Bruckmüller & Branscombe, 2010; Ryan, et al., 2011) although only two have specifically examined the relationship between feminine leadership and CP albeit in different research contexts (Mano-Negrin & Sheaffer, 2004; Sheaffer, Bogler & Sarfaty, 2011). Similarly, recent leadership literature is increasingly preoccupied with crises and notably CM (*cf.* James, Wooten & Dushek, 2011). Most however do not specifically allude to CP but rather integrate it as an inseparable part of CM, though CP or proneness should, we trust be investigated separately. Whilst most studies indicate that firms would benefit from transformational leaders as crisis managers (Williams et al. 2012), still others hail the merits of transactional leaders (Van Wart & Kapucu, 2011). That said, most studies that examine leaders as crisis managers accentuate CM as an all-inclusive process with but a marginal reference to either CP or crisis proneness. We address this lacuna aiming at exploring which leadership style would not resort to rationalisations as to why crises occur, hence be regarded crisis-prepared rather than crisis prone.

The primary theoretical contribution of our research lies in the integration of sensation seeking and LoC, along with leadership styles and femininity as precursors of CP or crisis proneness. Our underlying logic is that these predictors carry implicit cues as to why managers rationalise the occurrence of crises and regarding their classification as crisis prepared or prone. Our study thus, contributes to the literature on CM and notably to the critical issue of CP.

Theory and Hypotheses

CP is a state of corporate readiness to foresee and effectively address internal or exogenous adverse circumstances with the potential to inflict a multi-dimensional crisis by consciously recognising and proactively preparing for its inevitable occurrence (Sheaffer & Mano-Negrin, 2003). The inexorableness of a crisis emerging at some point in time attests to the indispensability of CP. Hence, CP is a strategic imperative as firms endeavour to coping effectively with potential crises (Prebel, 1997). CP constitutes a proactive element of CM, typically known as the 'preparation/prevention' or 'signal detection' phase (James & Wooten, 2005). CM prevention/preparation phase entails people and technology focussed activities (Reilly, 1993), aimed at decreasing vulnerability to failure at large and crises in particular. CP includes detection of early warning signals, efficient information flow, resources mobilisation and implementation, and fast decision-making (Elsubbaugh, Fildes & Rosen, 2004: 115). Importantly, effective CP is closely intertwined with corporate culture that facilitates and enhances awareness to crises and the need for an arsenal of coping mechanisms (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2008).

With a few exceptions, most recent CP literature focusses on the corporate rather than the leadership level. In a pioneering study Kets de Vries & Miller (1984) argued that organisational

inability to sense or avert crisis development is predicated on top executives' personal psychology, commonly portrayed as paranoid and megalomaniac. Hence such leaders often become excessively dramatic and aloof (Richardson, 1995). Characteristically, crisis prone leaders exhibit such behavioural patterns as selfishness, introversion, competitiveness and autocracy (Richardson, 1993: 33). Extending the scope to leaders' cognitive psychology, Greening and Johnson, (1996) focus on top managers' cognitive processes including complex thinking, dialectical inquiry and multiple perspectives as managerial traits that facilitate in solving 'catastrophic' problems. They found that these attributes are associated with fewer faulty assumptions about firms' vulnerability to crises, hence they reduce crisis proneness. Cognitive aspects as impediments to CP are discussed extensively by Watkins and Bazerman (2003: 76) who describe cognitive biases that are liable to result in disregard of looming disasters. These biases include harbouring illusions, overemphasising evidence that support preconceptions and adherence to the status quo. Mano-Negrin and Sheaffer (2003), and Sheaffer et al, (2011) went a step further by operationalising CP as a set of common rationalisations managers tend to raise concerning why crises occur and what can be done to prevent them.

LoC and CP

LoC is a theory in personality psychology that refers to the extent to which individuals believe they can control events that affect them (Ajzen, 2002). Being a bipolar personality variable LoC, (external and internal), affects people's attributional style (Peterson et al. 1982). People's locus can be either external, meaning they believe that their environment, a higher power or other individuals control their decisions and their lives, or internal, meaning individuals trust they have control over their lives (Wang, Tomlinson & Noe, 2010). Internal LoC, constitute a key resource necessary to cope with disasters (Sattler, Kaisar & Itner, 2000) considered an enabler to effective CP or an essential attribute that enhances preparation for disasters. Indeed Sattler et al. found that internal LoC accounts for a significant portion of the disaster preparation variance. Two factors limit response options people take into account; the controllability of outcomes and the feasibility of responses (Sweeny, 2008). These factors we argue pertain equally to crisis preparatory options because people perceive and consider the extent to which they are capable or inclined to contain or act on early warning signals. First, people's perception of control over such negative outcomes as crises, determines the availability of certain response options (Ajzen, 2002). If people perceive negative results to be avertable, they are likely to consider active response alternatives (internal LoC); if negative outcomes are deemed unavoidable or beyond their control (external LoC), they are likely to opt for comparatively passive response options (Sweeny and Shepperd, 2007). Likewise, self-efficacious people endowed with high internal LoC would be more receptive to information deemed critical in CP, and the likelihood of employing this knowledge to prepare for hazard (Bishop et al. 2000).

Studies have shown (*cf.* Breakwell, 2010; Leotti, Iyengar & Ochsner, 2010) that individuals with an internal LoC will exhibit a greater cognitive awareness of hazards and they will seek out additional information than those of external orientation. With external attribution, people often fail to anticipate defences against hazards (Mishra, Suar & Paton, 2009), thus are inevitably crisis-prone.

Externally oriented people would therefore tend to rely on exogenous constituents or high powers and would look outwards instead of inwards for solutions. Hence, they would regard CP as superfluous exempting them from the need or responsibility to be prepared for an impending crisis in advance. We may deduce therefore that external LoC is clearly a risk factor (Specht, Egloff & Schmukle, 2011) that inhibits CP.

Subsequently, we contend that perceived (or actual) CP is related to one's LoC. This is because externally oriented individuals would likely subjugate their personal fate to exogenous forces, be them sheer chance or ostensibly higher powers. These individuals tend to adduce

rationalisations as to why crises occur and how can crises be coped with. They will deem crises as inevitable such that no amount of preparation would make a difference. Individuals with an internal LoC, however, seek no externalities to blame for failure, nor do they look for external constituents when faced with challenges. Crisis literature (*cf.* Pearson&Mitroff, 1993; Yu, Sengul&Lester, 2008) allude to instances where executives shirk responsibility when faced with imminent failure by offering rationalisations (as to their inaction) aimed at imputing blame for their own malfunctioning or ineptitude to external sources. We therefore hypothesise:

Hypothesis1 People having an internal LoC would be less likely to bring forth rationalisations concerning perceived CP. Hence, internal LoC be associated with higher perceived CP.

ImpSS and CP

Risk taking in general refers to differences in the way individuals perceive their ways of dealing with risks (Meertens&Lion, 2008). Several personality traits affect the tendency to avoid or take risks, including sensation seeking (hereafter SS) (Zuckerman, 1979).

SS involves willingness to take physical and social risks in order to obtain varied, novel, and complex sensations (Zuckerman, *ibid.*). SS according to Arnett (1994) involves not solely a potential for risk-taking but also of seeking intensity and novelty of experience in multiple areas of individuals' lives. SS is positively associated with such general features as proneness to boredom in restrained and repetitive situations (López-Bonilla & López-Bonilla, 2010); tendency to avoid repetition (Cronin, 1995) and dislike of structured situations (Babbitt, Rowland, and Franken, 1990). Impulsiveness is a personality trait characterised by individuals' predisposition to initiate behaviour without adequate forethought as to the consequences of their actions (Ersche, Turton&Pradan, 2010), or acting on the spur of the moment (Koff&Lucas, 2011). We aim at highlighting the less frequently addressed relationship between ImpSS and perceived CP by postulating that impulsive sensation seekers are inattentive and haphazard, hence superficial in their attitude towards such unforeseeable events as crises. Thus, impulsive sensation seekers would necessarily refrain from undertaking preparatory measures designed to avert crises as they are inclined to act on impulse rather than thought (Patton &Stanford, 2011) and thus the pervading urge to seek sensation would incapacitate requisite concerns regarding risks.

The discussion of the tendency to be prepared and the contrary propensity to being risk-prone is discussed by Clark &Watson (1999). This framework provides insights into the types of behaviours associated with the temperament factor of disinhibition versus constraint (Elliott &Thrash, 2002). Pertinently, Clark and Watson, (1999: 403) argue that disinhibited individuals are impulsive and rather thoughtless and are oriented principally towards sensations and feelings of the immediate moment. Conversely, restrained individuals plan judiciously, shun risk or hazard, and are controlled more intensely by the longer-term implications of their behaviour. Risk orientation determines individuals' risk perception and therefore constitutes a driver of judgment processes (Rost&Osterloh, 2010). Sensation seekers' judgemental processes often reflect false illusion of control that may instigate them to believe that they can control the outcome of a random decision or situation predicated on their skills (Baker, Nofsinger&Weaver, 2002). Thus, executives may presuppose that they have a greater aptitude to foreknow and navigate potential hazards and may therefore systematically underrate the associated risks (Powell, Lovallo&Carinal, 2006). Necessarily then, biased risk perception diminishes preparatory actions in the face of looming crises owing to these individuals' penchant for sensation that overshadows their requisite responsibility to take precautionary measures. These considerations lead to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis2 Impulsive sensation seekers will be more likely to adduce rationalisations as to why crises occur, hence less attentive to CP.

Leadership and CP

Research indicates that the nature of leadership in non-crisis situations is not exclusively distinguishable from leadership in crisis circumstances, notably as crisis managers (Evans, Hammersly&Robertson, 2001). Key to understanding the interrelatedness between CP and leadership style is Hadley et. al.'s (2011: 636) definition of procedural CP as the psychological feeling of being well equipped to respond to a crisis predicated on determining and/or practicing formal response plans. Procedural CP is important because firms would not be adequately prepared without having a well planned and meticulously delineated CM plan (Jaques, 2009). This refers to how effective leaders are in effectuating these procedures regardless of their style. We specifically aim at exploring which leadership style would be more attuned to CP, else which leadership style would be crisis-prone in terms of perceiving rationalisations concerning organisational crisis.

Transformational and transactional leadership

For years, the transformational and transactional leadership styles have been instrumental in the study of leadership. Bass and Avolio (1993) define four behavioural attributes of transformational leadership: charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. Contrastingly, transactional leadership is characterised by an exchange of rewards for performance, and by a precise clarification of the work required in order to obtain rewards.

Mano-Negrin and Shaeffer (2004) examined whether crisis awareness and CP are affected by gender given that female executives are often more transformational whilst their male counterparts largely typify transactional style (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt &van Engen, 2003). They showed that feminine-oriented transformational leaders tended to reject rationalisations as to why crises occur. Hunt, Boal and Dodge (1999) indicated that crisis-responsive charismatic leaders tend to emerge during crises. Qualities of crisis responsive leadership include emphasis on the prerequisite of getting efforts and contributions from others, striving for consensus, fostering cooperation, inspiring subordinates, engendering commitment and reducing uncertainties (Aragón-Correa et al., 2007). Effective communication and mutual trust have also been identified as conducive to CM (Tseng, Chen &Chou, 2005). Implicitly portraying archetypal transactional leaders, Boin, t'Hart and Kouzmin (2003: 547) contend that executives are generally averse to considering crisis contingency planning which entails long-term efforts to improve reliability (Weick, Sutcliffe &Obstfeld, 1999). This lack of CP however cannot be described merely as the product of exacting trade-offs in the allocation of leadership attention. TMT's are socialised into pursuing opportunities to outperform competitors rather than exercising mandatory strategic contingencies including CP (Prebel, 1997). This proclivity typifies transactional leadership and in-turn it escalates crisis proneness. CM literature provides comprehensive CM frameworks emphasising the role of transformational and charismatic leadership perspectives (*cf.* Hadley, Pittinsky, Sommer&Zhu).

However, little research focusses on how leaders effectively respond to crises (*cf.* Sweeny, 2008) and chiefly, how leadership capabilities may be evaluated prior to a crisis occurring (Schoenberg, 2005). Such knowledge is essential in delineating a systematic understanding of crisis leadership primarily the development of CP capabilities. Crisis leadership literature has principally converged on transformational leaders and their effectiveness in crisis (e.g., Halverson et al., 2004). However, the distinction between the suitability of the leadership style to different crisis phases has yet to be sufficiently developed. For instance Rosenthal, Hart and Kouzmin (1991) contend that CM would, in fact necessitate temporary concentration of powers. Most authors however, have maintained that the effect of transformational leadership is especially important *during* crises. Baliga and Hunt (1988) asserted that transformational leadership is crucial during the birth, growth, or

organisational revitalisation phases, often typified by frequent changes and crises. Transformational leaders engage their followers in collective actions, help them cope with crisis, and improve functioning and satisfaction (Bligh, Kohles&Meindl, 2004). They communicate confidence in a positive future and enhance underlings' self-efficacy. Ostensibly, the positive, confident, and inspiring nature of a transformational leadership contributes to subordinates' positive assessment of the circumstances and enhances their belief in their capacity to cope successfully with them.

Contrastingly, transactional leaders are endowed with different attributes. Richardson (1995) postulated that crisis-prone leaders tend to exhibit a higher degree of managerial "one-sidedness". Accordingly, (transactional leaders) are over-biased, hazardously and disproportionately stressing a single extremity, hence are crisis-prone. A failure prone leader is characterised by such transactional traits as competitiveness, strictness to procedures, technical approach and selfishness.(Richardson, 1993).

We postulate therefore that transformational attributes typically facilitate CP whilst transactional traits would be conducive in actual CM.

Formally we hypothesise:

Hypothesis3 Managers acting as transformational leaders will tend to be positively associated with CP perceptions.

Feminine leadership style and CP

Facing prolonged financial distress, organisations worldwide are confronting the intense consequences concerning their internal functioning and employee welfare (Peus, 2011). Hence, leaders must have appropriate CM capabilities notably with respect to leading followers. Whilst a stereotypical response to crisis may be to 'take charge' of the situation brusquely, research adduces evidence to the contrary (Gartzia et al., 2012, p. 5). Interpersonally-oriented of such ostensibly feminine leadership attributes as empathy, support or fostering teamwork and participation (Aragón-Correa, García-Morales &Cordón-Pozo, 2007), are pertinent in crisis contexts (Madera &Smith, 2009).Predicated on the postulation that many instrumental leadership capabilities concur with stereotypically feminine attributes and roles, the 'think crisis-think female' connotation (Ryan, et al., 2011) appears relevant in preparing for crises.

Scholarly interest in differences between male and female executives' functioning during crises suggest that female managers are more likely to be appointed during a time of poor performance or when the risk of failure is apparent (Ryan et al., 2011, p. 472). Subsequently, female leadership positions are likely to be viewed as more precarious than those of men (Adams, Gupta &Leeth, 2009). Additionally, common wisdom has it that women were selected as leaders during crises owing to their unique 'feminine' capabilities, including such explanations as 'women always want to help the underdog,' have 'more skills to balance risk,' and they "tend to cope with failure more pragmatically than men' (Ryan et al., 2009, p. 190). Lalonde (2004) suggested that such feminine attributes as understanding, intuition and compassion are specifically beneficial during crises.Unlike studies that focus on the relationship between female attributes and effective CM, we ask whether female executives are crisis prepared or prone. Specifically we explore whether feminine leadership attributes are conducive to CP, or else aggravate crisis proneness. Indeed, only a few works refer specifically to the benefits or detriments of this style with respect to CP (Sheaffer,at el, ,2011). "Feminine" managerial characteristics and the interrelatedness between them and crisis awareness induce a potentially more effective CM.Mano-Negrin and Sheaffer (2004) argue that women are more likely to endorse a democratic orientation augmenting participative and consensual decision making, and diversity of ideas. Consequently, we argue that purportedly feminine attributes would be conducive to CP. Moreover, women managers confront stronger stressors than their male counterparts (Watson, Wah-Goh&Sawang, 2011), e.g. householdchores, inferior social networking,

and the need to "prove" themselves in male-dominated milieus. These stressors possibly induce greater awareness regarding the need to avoid crises, hence prompt women to do better than men in handling CP. Converging the literature addressing compatibility between feminine traits and transformational leadership (Powell, Butterfield & Bartol, 2008), with CP seems plausible notably given that empathy, holism, harmonic relationships or equity principles facilitate CP. Taken together, these arguments suggest the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4 Feminine leadership attributes, endorsed by male and female managers alike, would be positively associated with perceptions of CP.

Methods

Sample and Procedure

First, a questionnaire was pre-tested with 24 mid-level local gov't managers for construct validity and clarity. Second, following minor refinements of the instrument, the questionnaire were administered to three sub-samples (Table 1) and consisted of two parts. Part I was comprised of demographic information; Part II of validated scales (crisis proneness/CP, gender, LoC, leadership and Imp_SS).

The pre-test and the university administrators groups were administered a computerised questionnaire. The rest were given a hardcopy form. We identified no significant differences between respondents of the two groups (N = 208). All data were gleaned from the questionnaire administered in Hebrew. Respondents were assured their participation was voluntary and anonymous. 235 respondents were approached, 208 filled in the questionnaire (89%). We applied several measures to decrease social desirability bias. First, anonymous self administration was used to provide neutrality, detachment and reassurance (Grimm, 2010). Second, neutralised administration through PC was applied (McBurney, 1994), though given technical problems only 22% of the respondents filled in a computerised questionnaire.

Table 1 Sample Summary

Sub-sample	Type of questionnaire	N
Pretest group: local government officers	computerised	24
University administrators	computerised	21
Local gov't managers	hardcopy	135
MBA students (junior and mid-level managers)	hardcopy	28
Total		208

report limitations necessitated several remedies. First, scale reordering (Sprangers & Schwartz, 1999) was employed to reduce the effects of consistency artifacts. Second, we administered the questionnaires at two points in time, such that all statements making up the independent variables were first to be filled in followed by the statements making up the dependent variable at a time lag of two weeks (Podaskoff et al. 2003). We asked the respondents to indicate on each survey part their maternal grandparents' given names in order to match the two parts of the survey. Second, Awareness concerning self-

Harmans's one-factor test was employed (Richard et al., 2009) to ensure that no common method variance is present. We factor analysed all items of this study to guarantee that no single factor emerged from this procedure (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Indeed, the items loaded onto thematic factors.

Measures

Crisis preparedness, dependent variable

Essentially, crises constitute a traumatic organisational occurrence (Probert & James, 2011). As such, they inevitably affect top managers who are accountable, and bear inclusive responsibility for their organisation's survival or demise. Top managers therefore are oftentimes reluctant to relate to crises notably when they occurred during their incumbency (Veil, 2011). The disinclination to divulge on negative issues including crises (Yariv, 2006), complicates empirical research on crises as indispensable information regarding their antecedents and management or mismanagement implicitly implicates TMTs. Also, crises are rare events and as such investigators' ability to survey sufficient number of crisis-experienced managers is necessarily limited. Following previous works we circumvented this by referring to perceptions rather than actual occurrences (*cf.* Coombs & Holladay, 1996). We used Sheaffer et al.'s (2011) validated scale that operationalised rationalisations habitually adduced by managers to vindicate how, why and in what circumstances crises occur. The instrument was a 16 item ($\alpha=.74$) five-point Likert scale. Following FA we created four indices (total variance explained 56.7). We used the first index that included four statements ($\alpha=.75$). Following several attempts, this index proved to be the most 'potent' dependent variable, thus we used it in our hierarchical regression model (Table 2).

Independent variables

We used two indices previously employed to predict CP; gender and leadership styles (Sheaffer et al., 2011; Evans et al., 2001). We entered two indices that have not hitherto been examined as antecedents to CP with the view of estimating their prediction potential of CP; LoC and ImpSS.

Leadership

Leadership was measured using the MLQ 36 item (Bass & Avolio, 1993) validated and translated to Hebrew by Dvir (1998). We factor analysed these statements with the view of gleaning transactional and a transformational factors which were loaded exclusively on two factors (Table 1).

Gender

Gender included the 28 item 7-point Likert scale Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (Hoffman and Borders, 2001) validated and translated to Hebrew by Bresler (2000). We elected to focus on the feminine components and following FA we used an index comprised of 11 items (Table 2).

ImpSS

A measure which joins impulsivity and sensation seeking was developed from a study showing that the two constructs are correlated and that they predict the same types of behavioural phenomena (Zuckerman, 1994). The impulsivity trait involves under-estimation of risk and lack of planning (Breen & Zuckerman, 1999). Factor analyses of personality scales consistently yielded a factor labeled 'Impulsive Unsocialized Sensation Seeking' (Zuckerman et al. 1991). Subsequent item and factor analyses of the items in these scales yielded five reliable factors, one of which was labeled ImpSS. The 19-item ImpSS inventory has been used in studies ranging from gambling and gender (McDaniel & Zuckerman, 2003) to consumer enjoyment of promotional games (McDaniel, 2002), amongst other domains where risky behaviour was addressed. Though the original scale has

19 items, we dropped two items to enhance reliability using a 17 item index ($\alpha=.79$) ranging from 0 (low sensation seeker) to 1 (high sensation seeker).

Table 2 Indices, content, α and total variance explained by FA

Factor (Index)	Content	α	Total Variance Explained
CP	It is impossible to prepare for a crisis since it is unexpected; Most crises are resolved by themselves; It would be enough to take action when the crisis hits; I mostly ascribe failure to exogenous factors	.75	56.659
Transactional	I avoid intervening until problems become acute; I take action only when the fulfillment of a certain goal fails; I wait until things go awry before I take action; I refrain from making decisions; I intervene even if important issues crop up; I wait until problems start to drag before taking action	.81	53.511
Transformational	I treat every employee personally and not merely as another organizational member; I act beyond my own interests for the org. good; I reiterate the importance of the sense of common organization; I treat every individual differently as having needs and abilities; I help my employees to develop their strengths ; I offer new ways of understanding tasks; I encourage my employees to look at problems from different perspectives	.82	53.511
Gender (Female)	I express warmth; I express sympathy; I express affection; my speaking style is soft and sensitive; I'm polite and considerate; I'm sensitive; I'm delicate; I love kids; I'm sensitive to others' needs; I express humility; I'm cheerful	.88	61.99

LoC

The LoC scale was used in studies involving crisis communication (Coombs and Holladay, 2002) and disaster management (Sattler, Kaisar&Itner, 2000), amongst others. We used a validated forwards-backwards translation into Hebrew of the abbreviated LoC scale which included 15 items from the original 29 item Rotter's (1966) LoC scale (Kern, 1992). Three items were dropped from the original scale to enhance reliability using a 12 item index ($\alpha=.75$) ranging from 12 (high external) to 60 (high internal).

Control variables

In preliminary tests of the model, education, religion, military experience and management experience proved to be inefficient predictors in the hierarchical regression model. We thus controlled for age and seniority. We argue that the older and more experienced the managers, the more likely they are to use fewer rationalisations regarding to such negative occurrences (Petty & Wegener, 1991) as crises antecedents and CM.

Missing data corrections

A negligible number of cases in all four scales were missing and in those we used pairwise deletion.

Results

Means, standard deviations and zero-order correlations of control and research variables are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations^a

Variable	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. CP	3.53	.74	(.74)							
2. age	42.44	11.95	.179*							
3. seniority	9.24	7.60	-.119	-.368**						
4. LoC	-32.15	6.1	.369**	.227**	-.045	(.75)				
5. Imp-SS	0.43	0.18	.307**	-.212**	.068	-.310**	(.79)			
6. Transactional	2.07	0.61	-.402**	-.001	.064	-.327**	-.250**	(.81)		
7. Transformational	3.99	0.52	.403**	.044	-.065	.285**	-.012	-.307**	(.82)	
8. Female	5.87	0.67	-.032	.092	.230**	.234**	-.064	-.019	.307**	(.88)

^an=208. Coefficient α reliabilities are in parentheses along the diagonal.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 4 provides the results of the hierarchical regression. We used hierarchical regression in order to estimate the unique explained variance of our research variables on CP above and beyond the effect of the control variables. Hence, control variables were entered as a first block followed by the four independent variables: LoC; Transactional, Transformational, Imp_SS, and Femininity. Total model estimated variance was 37%, with the independent variables block explaining 30% of the model's variance. All predictors entered were significant. Both Age (+) and Seniority (-) were significant in the regression model. Results corroborate (H1), LoC ($\beta = .16$, $p < .05$) (H2), ImpSS ($\beta = -.18$, $p < .01$) and (H3) where, as hypothesised, transformational leaders proved to be crisis prepared ($\beta = .34$, $p < .01$) whilst transactional leaders have been shown to be crisis prone ($\beta = -.20$, $p < .01$). Results refute (H4), Femininity ($\beta = -.19$). This result counters the hypothesised direction, meaning respondents high on the femininity scale are largely associated with crisis proneness.

Discussion

This study's major motivation was to discuss and evaluate the extent to which ImpSS predict CP, else aggravate crisis proneness and whether internal or external LoC enhances CP. These avowedly important behavioural constructs have not thus far been integrated empirically in the burgeoning organisational crisis literature. This, despite the fact that both theoretical concepts hold interesting and admittedly challenging research scope as both implicitly shape managers' propensity to take or avoid risk. That said, we aimed at examining how ImpSS, an important psychological phenomenon, affects CP or crisis proneness, much like how internal and external LoC influence the degree of perceived CP amongst mid-level managers.

ImpSS has been used abundantly in a wide-ranging theoretical disciplines as key to understanding individuals' tendency to succumb to impulse, hence to indulge in sensation seeking as an ingrained behavioural habit. Likewise, LoC has been fundamental in expounding people's embedded predisposition to rely on one's self in guiding and shaping control over one's destiny or else to surrender to exogenous forces to delineate one's fate. We also employed gender (feminine) traits and leadership styles as predictors of CP with the view of corroborating the few earlier studies that used these constructs in relation to either CM or CP. As hypothesised we found that impulsive sensation seekers are more likely to offer rationalisations regarding crisis occurrences and what can

Table 4 Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for CP

IV Block		β	R ²	ΔR^2
Step 1 - Control Block	Age	.26**	.07**	.07
	Seniority	-.21**		
Step 2 –Research Variables Block			.37**	.30**
LoC (H1)		.16*		
Imp-SS (H2)		-.18**		
Leadership (H3)	Transactional	-.20**		
	Transformational	.34**		
Female (H4)		-.19**		

Values represent standardized regression coefficients from the final equation

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

or cannot be done to prevent them. Impulsive sensation seekers therefore would necessarily be less aware of the vital role CP plays in preventing crises or reducing their adverse effects. The (highly significant) inverse relationship between ImpSS and CP, implies that respondents who scored high on ImpSS are more impulsive, hence inclined to seek sensations in life experiences whereas respondents who scored low on the CP scale are crisis-prone. According to the reward-choice paradigms, impulsivity is defined as preference for a small immediate reward over a larger delayed reward (Ainslie, 1975) and the response disinhibition/attentional paradigm defines impulsivity as either making premature responses or as the inability to withhold a response (Marsh et al. 2002). These definitions suggest that impulsive individuals would necessarily succumb to seeking sensations because they prefer instantaneous recompense and are unable to suppress the desire for a swift materialisation of their sensations. Hence, it appears plausible that impulsive sensation seekers tend to underestimate indispensable precautionary measures embedded in the very notion of CP. CP requires meticulous planning of contingency plans, periodic training and importantly, awareness regarding crises. A key preparatory measure of CP also involves heeding to early warning signals. Inevitably, impulsive sensation seekers' proclivity to be attuned to quick gains precludes preparation for eventualities that would innately thwart the realisation of their sensations. Also, leaders afflicted by high Imp_SS follow impetuous decision-making devoid of a rational basis. Hence haphazard consideration of decisional inputs reflects solely aspirations for immediate rewards or potentially positive outcomes (Owen & Davidson, 2009). Necessarily such leaders often afflicted by hubris, would be prone to SS that in turn impedes systematic consideration of adverse scenarios thereby undermining immediate gains or thoughtlessly envisaged strategies. Essentially, CP constitutes a well thought out organisation-wide plan to prevent crises or reduce their undesirable ramifications. As such, CP would be undermined or precluded altogether when impulsive sensation-seeking leaders are faced with the need to either delineate or employ CP.

We corroborated H1 postulating that managers with external LoC would be associated with crisis proneness as opposed to their counterparts typified by internal LoC who adduced fewer rationalisations for crisis occurring.

Put differently, respondents identified with external LoC tend to opt for rationalisations as to why crises occur and what can or cannot be done to manage them. This finding is commensurate with previous studies that identified external LoC to be associated with negative outcomes, including personal adjustment patterns (Hill & Hilton, 1999), or conflict and stress management (Dijkstra,

Beersma&Evers, 2011). Since both types differ in the way they interpret the relationship between life events and personal outcomes, it appears reasonable that individuals' prior experience of disaster or crisis may have differential impacts on their future preparedness (e.g. whether they augment the likelihood of a positive outcome). Moreover, their receptivity to CP information is evidently different and in turn is likely to affect their CP. Managers characterised by external attribution have opted for crisis rationalisations and hence, they are inevitably less prepared because they succumb to rationalising why crises occur and should they occur, how can they be managed. Being externally controlled, they innately thought that forces beyond their control will serve their CP purposes. Thus, there is no need to be prepared in advance. In this vein external LoC is clearly a risk factor (Wheaton, 1982) that scuttles CP.

Following earlier works we hypothesised and corroborated the relationship between transformational leadership and CP. We found that transformational leaders are less likely to endorse crisis rationalisations, hence are crisis-prepared whereas their transactional counterparts appear to sanction crisis rationalisations and are therefore crisis-prone. That said we based our reasoning chiefly on theoretical treatises and empirical evidence that focussed on CM at large. This is because presently the crisis leadership literature has predominantly converged on transformational leaders and their effectiveness in crisis (Halverson et al., 2004). However, the distinction between the suitability of the type of leadership to different crisis phases has yet to be adequately developed. Transformational leaders demonstrate self-awareness, motivation, charisma and other social skills. These attributes facilitate and enhance sociability and solidarity, hence teamwork which is a vital for effective collaboration at large and organisation-wide CP activities in particular (Lee, Jares&Heath, 1999). Importantly, being able to stimulate underlings is crucial primarily in terms of enhancing mindfulness concerning crises. Though crises occur more frequently nowadays they are still rare events. Galvanising subordinates cooperation vis-à-vis preparations for such unspecified occurrence as crisis requires a range of transformational competences and skills. Additionally, transformational leaders have the capacity to arouse subordinates' aspirations to attaining goals deemed beyond their original expectations. This includes subordinates' willingness to be counted and relied upon when the organisational survival is at stake. Hence, transformational leaders can expect their subordinates' cooperation in addressing collective and individual preparatory tasks deemed critical prior to crises.

Since scoring high on the CP scale means rejecting crisis rationalisations hence being crisis prepared and scoring high on the femininity scale indicates 'being more feminine', respondents typified by conspicuous femininity, men and women alike, are necessarily crisis prepared. However, our results indicate that contrary to previous research, feminine attributes are associated with crisis proneness. Our finding contradicts Mano-Negrin and Sheaffer (2004) and Sheaffer et al, (2011) results. They found that feminine attributes are more likely to facilitate CP. We attribute the contradictory results to differences in the research populations and research designs (e.g. Kish, 1959; Zahara, 2005).

Implications

The findings of this study suggest several practical implications. First, with the growing awareness to crises TMTs must not only be mindful of their adverse repercussions, they should encourage leaders at higher echelons to be more attuned to the merits of transformational traits. Preparing organisations for crises is not merely technical, it entails organisation-wide mobilisation of competences, willingness and enthusiasm. Achieving these ambitious goals would gain from transformational leadership that should be conscientiously mobilised to enhance CP. External LoC and ImpSS are ingrained human propensities thus largely unchangeable, much like feminine traits, hence it would seem impractical to try and alter them. Notwithstanding, leaders should monitor these

predispositions and be cognizant of the need to getting them balanced off in such specific circumstances as crisis and notably when preparations for crises are concerned.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations in this study warrant caution in interpreting the findings. First, the sample included mostly young mid-level managers, for most crises constitute an event they have yet to either manage or experience. In a way this holds true for many TMT members but top executives' overall responsibility including CM and specifically CP is likely to generate a somewhat different perception of crisis. Moreover, the likelihood of diverse and more extended managerial experience may also alter the way crises are perceived. Thus, future research would benefit noticeably from a more varied sample including chiefly TMT members. Whilst we had a reasonable N we advocate not merely enlarging the research population but chiefly diversifying it nationally and ethnically. Second, despite the apparent difficulty in engaging sufficient number of crisis-experienced executives, future studies would benefit from the inclusion of both crisis-experienced and those lacking experience. This would enrich our understanding of additional CP insights and enable useful and enlightening comparisons between the two groups, vis-à-vis crisis perception at large and CP insights in particular. Third, we employed several remedies regarding common method bias in our self-reported measures. Recently however, Chan (2009) and Conway and Lance (2010) have stated that alleged problems associated with self reports are overstated. We took a proactive research design to mitigate threats of method effects. Notwithstanding, we are aware of the merits of drawing on two sources and should these be available they could be employed in future research principally regarding leadership and gender. Fourth, we encourage future investigators to add managers' self efficacy as a mediating construct preferably employing SEM such that ImpSS and LoC would predict leadership styles that in-turn would explain their respective self efficacy as predictor of CP. Necessarily, such model requires a larger N, which we fell short of having in the current study.

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