



ISSN 1304-8120 | e-ISSN 2149-2786

**Araştırma Makalesi \* Research Article**

## Polyphonic Amateur Choir Conductors' Views On Leadership Management Strategies: A Phenomenological Study\*

### Çok Sesli Amatör Koro Şeflerinin Liderlik Yönetim Stratejileri İle İlgili Görüşleri: Fenomenolojik Çalışma

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**Abstract:** Music and strategy refer to the planned and purposeful use of music to achieve specific goals. Applied in fields such as music management, education, psychology, and industry, this concept is considered an effective tool for reaching objectives at both individual and societal levels. Leadership is the process of guiding, motivating, and developing strategies to help a group or organization achieve its goals. In this context, choir conductors are seen as leaders who direct musical groups. This study examines the leadership strategies of amateur polyphonic choir conductors. Using a qualitative research method and a phenomenological approach, the leadership styles and strategic thinking of conductors were analyzed. Data collected through semi-structured interviews reveal that conductors make strategic decisions in choir management, handle crises effectively, and approach repertoire selection with care. Additionally, their efforts to strengthen choir members' sense of belonging through social activities are noteworthy. The findings demonstrate that amateur choir conductors' leadership skills have significant impacts on the sustainability and performance of the choir. This research offers valuable contributions to choir conducting education and the management of amateur music groups.

**Keywords:** Music, strategy, leadership, choir, choirmaster.

**Öz:** Müzik ve strateji, müziğin belirli hedefler doğrultusunda planlı ve amaçlı kullanımını ifade eder. Müzik yönetimi, eğitim, psikoloji ve endüstri gibi alanlarda uygulanan bu kavram, bireysel ve toplumsal düzeyde hedeflere ulaşmada etkili bir araç olarak değerlendirilir. Liderlik ise, bir grup veya organizasyonun amaçlarına ulaşması için bireyleri yönlendirme, motive etme ve strateji geliştirme sürecidir. Bu bağlamda koro şefleri, müzikal grupları yönlendiren liderler olarak görülür. Bu çalışmada, amatör çok sesli koro şeflerinin liderlik

\* Bu çalışma, ikinci yazarın birinci yazar danışmanlığında tamamladığı yüksek lisans tezinden üretilmiştir.

Arrival Date:02.10.2024

Acceptance Date:30.12.2024

Publication Date:30.04.2025

**Reference:** Şakalar, Yılma, G. & Yıldırım, M.A. (2025). Çok sesli amatör koro şeflerinin liderlik yönetim stratejileri ile ilgili görüşleri: Fenomenolojik çalışma. *Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University Social Sciences Journal*, 22(1), 194–215. Doi: 10.33437/ksusbıd.1559806

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stratejileri incelenmiştir. Nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılarak, fenomenolojik yaklaşımla şeflerin liderlik tarzları ve stratejik düşünceleri ele alınmıştır. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla elde edilen veriler, şeflerin koro yönetiminde stratejik kararlar aldığını, krizleri başarıyla yönettiğini ve repertuvar seçiminde titizlikle hareket ettiklerini ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca, sosyal etkinliklerle koristlerin aidiyet duygusunu güçlendirme çabaları dikkat çekmektedir. Bulgular, amatör koro şeflerinin liderlik becerilerinin koronun sürdürülebilirliği ve performansı üzerinde önemli etkiler yarattığını göstermektedir. Bu araştırma, koro şefliği eğitime ve amatör müzik topluluklarının yönetimine katkı sunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Müzik, strateji, liderlik, koro, koro şefi

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## GİRİŞ

Strategy can be defined as the overall plan and methods followed to achieve a specific goal. Developing strategies for an organization or individual to reach certain objectives ensures that steps are taken consciously towards achieving these goals. Leadership, on the other hand, is the process of guiding, motivating, and providing direction to individuals in order to help a group or organization achieve its objectives. Leadership strategy encompasses all the methods, tactics, and behaviors a leader employs to reach specific goals. These strategies are determined to enhance the leader's influence over the group and facilitate the achievement of desired outcomes.

There are various approaches to leadership, including authoritarian leadership, democratic leadership, laissez-faire leadership, and transformational leadership. Authoritarian leadership refers to a style where the leader makes all decisions independently, with limited consideration of the views of other group members, while democratic leadership encourages active participation from group members in decision-making processes. Laissez-faire leadership, or permissive leadership, represents an approach where the leader allows the group to make its own decisions. In contrast, transformational leadership aims to motivate group members to realize their potential by aligning them with the leader's vision and goals. Each type of leadership offers specific advantages and disadvantages depending on different situations and needs. The use of these leadership styles can also vary based on the demographic characteristics of leaders. For example, a study on local managers in Turkey found that those who adopted democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles were more inclined to exhibit submissive behaviors compared to authoritarian leaders (Yörük & Dündar, 2011).

Authoritarian leadership is characterized by the leader establishing strict control and strong authority over the group. In this style, the leader often makes decisions alone and limits the participation of group members. Authoritarian leaders operate with a strong sense of discipline and impose strict rules that group members must follow. This leadership style has several characteristics and effects. For instance, authoritarian leaders typically maintain control by limiting group members' involvement in decision-making processes (Zhang & Xie, 2017). Transformational leadership, on the other hand, involves leaders empowering their followers, fostering solidarity within the group, and cultivating a culture of working together towards common goals (Jung & Sosik, 2002). This leadership style can also enhance job satisfaction and psychological well-being among employees, as transformational leaders help followers find meaning in their work and seize development opportunities (Nielsen et al., 2008).

Democratic leadership is a leadership style where the leader encourages the participation of individuals within the group and shares responsibility in decision-making processes. This leadership approach involves not only holding an authoritative position but also empowering members, facilitating their participation, and assisting in decision-making. Democratic leadership presents a model where members can exchange roles, allowing everyone to lead. In this model, leadership is viewed as a constantly changing role rather than a fixed position (Gastil, 1994). Democratic leadership has a strong relationship with choir conducting. Choir conducting is the art of leading a musical group composed of many individuals, and in this context, democratic leadership is crucial as it empowers and encourages the participation of the group. Choir conductors not only teach musical techniques but also support the emotional and social development of group members. This leadership style can enhance the performance and commitment of choir members, as individuals feel part of the group and can effectively fulfill their roles (Carnicer et al., 2015).

Democratic leadership allows choir conductors to go beyond being merely authoritative figures. This leadership style promotes a sense of cooperation and equality among group members. Choir

conductors create a space for members to express themselves and participate in decision-making processes beyond musical guidance. This can lead to increased creativity and participation within the choir. Additionally, this leadership approach enhances trust among members and towards the conductor, thereby fostering a stronger bond within the group (Koivunen & Parush, 2018). In this context, democratic leadership, when integrated with choir conducting, offers an approach that positively impacts both musical performance and group dynamics. This leadership style encourages participation, supports individual development, and creates a more inclusive group structure.

Choir conducting holds a special significance in music management and leadership. The choir conductor serves as the guide for the group, not only musically but also in terms of leadership. In managing the choir, the conductor uses leadership strategies to motivate choir members, provide guidance, and develop strategies aimed at enhancing the quality of the musical performance. The leadership style of the choir conductor significantly impacts the overall performance of the choir as well as the communication and cooperation among its members. Thus, developing effective leadership strategies by the choir conductor is crucial for the success of the choir.

Amateur choirs in Turkey play a significant role in preserving and enhancing cultural diversity and musical richness. These choirs cater to a wide range of participants, spreading music education and allowing individuals to develop their forms of artistic expression. Moreover, amateur choirs serve as important platforms that strengthen social bonds within the community and enable individuals to work together towards a common goal. Another reason amateur choirs are significant in Turkey is that they provide an opportunity for those with limited access to professional music education to make music.

Studies related to music and strategy are often linked to fields such as music education, music psychology, music management and organization, and the music industry. There is research that shows how music can be strategically used in various fields and how it can influence strategy development processes. In the field of music education, the use of strategy varies according to the expertise level of the students. Effective use of strategy is achieved by students acquiring correct auditory schemas, which allows them to monitor and correct their errors (Hallam, 2001).

Music can also be used as an emotion regulation strategy. Individuals can enhance their well-being by using music to regulate their emotions and employing strategies such as cognitive reappraisal. However, listening to music and using emotional suppression strategies can sometimes have negative effects (Chin & Rickard, 2014). In the business world, music plays a crucial role in marketing and brand management strategies. Music can influence consumer behavior and be effective in creating brand loyalty (Leenders, 2010). Additionally, improvisation and experimental approaches during musical performance can be used as creative and flexible thinking patterns in business strategy development processes. Improvisation occurs based on musical knowledge and skills and requires spontaneous decisions rather than predetermined plans. This parallels strategic thinking in the business world. Musical improvisation encourages creative problem-solving in uncertain situations and is an important skill for dealing with unexpected situations in the business world. The requirement for quick thinking and flexibility during improvisation is also critical in strategy development processes (Goldman, 2013; Johnston, 2013). From this perspective, it is considered that strategy can also be effective in performance.

The relationship between music and strategy is particularly evident in choir management. Music, in addition to being a creative and disciplined field, also requires strategic planning and management. Choir conductors make various strategic decisions, such as setting performance goals, selecting repertoire, organizing rehearsals, planning concerts, and ensuring the sustainability of the choir. In this context, the relationship between music and strategy is a fundamental element for the successful management of the choir. Choir conductors combine their musical talents and leadership skills to develop effective strategies in both art and management. It can also be said that due to the amateur nature of the choir, they contribute to amateur music education and develop strategies in this way.

This research adopts a qualitative research method and employs a phenomenological design to understand the leadership strategies of polyphonic amateur choir conductors in Turkey. Phenomenology is a research method that aims to deeply understand the experiences individuals have concerning a specific phenomenon. Semi-structured interview forms were used as a data collection tool.

The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using content analysis, and the findings were interpreted in detail. The results of the research provide important insights into the leadership strategies of amateur choir conductors in Turkey and contribute to the literature in this field. In this context, the findings of the research can be instructive in terms of choir conducting education, leadership management, and the sustainability of amateur music groups.

## **METHOD**

In the research, a comprehensive literature review was first conducted on scientific publications (books, articles, papers, theses, etc.) in the fields of music and strategy, leadership, and choir conducting. Subsequently, qualitative research methods were examined, and the phenomenological design was chosen. Due to the scarcity of studies on polyphonic amateur choir conductors in Turkey and the lack of studies specifically employing phenomenology in this context, random sampling was used to reach both independent choir conductors and those actively associated with an institution or organization. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using a prepared interview form, and data were collected through this method. The data obtained were deeply analyzed and interpreted through content analysis. The research was concluded by presenting findings and suggestions based on all the information, documents, and data collected.

### **Research Design**

This research was designed and conducted using qualitative methods. Utilizing a phenomenological design, the experiences of conductors managing polyphonic amateur choirs in Turkey were collected and deeply analyzed through content analysis.

### **Study Group**

The research focused on polyphonic amateur choir conductors in Turkey. The experiences of six choir conductors, aged between 23 and 49, residing in the cities of Ankara, Balıkesir, Çanakkale, and Istanbul, were explored. These experiences included their journey to becoming choir conductors, the design process of forming a choir, the process of choir management, crisis management, and the effective sustainability of the choir, particularly in relation to music and strategy.

### **Research Process**

The research process spanned eight months and included a literature review, the creation of a research framework, methodology, data collection and analysis, interpretation of findings, and the formulation of conclusions and recommendations.

### **Data Collection Tools**

In the research, data were collected using a semi-structured interview form that was developed specifically for leadership strategy. This form was structured around various dimensions, including the design process, management process, management strategies, process management, and crisis management. Interviews were conducted within these dimensions.

### **Data Analysis**

The transcripts of the interviews were created, and these transcripts were examined and analyzed using content analysis.

## **FINDINGS**

The participants consisted of four men and two women aged between 23 and 49. Their educational backgrounds varied, with three holding undergraduate degrees and three holding master's degrees. Three participants graduated in Music Education, one in Opera, one in Music Theory, and one in Piano and Accompaniment. Besides their roles as choir conductors, the participants' professions included music teaching, chorister, concert pianist, and music educator. In terms of amateur choir experience, they have been conducting choirs for a minimum of 2 years and a maximum of 13 years. Regarding the types of choirs conducted, most participants (five) lead adult choirs, while one conducts both children's and youth choirs. The participants have managed amateur choirs for periods ranging

from 2 to 13 years and have led multiple choirs, including new ones in the past two years. The choirs they manage are located in Ankara, Balıkesir, Çanakkale, and Istanbul. Among these choirs, four are independent, seven are affiliated with associations, and two are part of institutions.

**Table 1.** *Types and levels of choirs conducted by choir directors*

Type	Participant	Level	Participant
Adult	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6	Professional	P3
Youth	P4	Semi Professional	P6
Child	P4	Amateur	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6
Mixed	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6		
Women	P3		
Male	P6		

Table 1 shows that all participants conduct amateur choirs, with only P3 also conducting a semi-professional choir. It is evident that all participants lead choirs consisting of adults and mixed voice types, with the exception of P4, who conducts youth and children's choirs. Additionally, it is noted that P3 directs an all-female choir, while P6 leads an all-male choir. Furthermore, P6, who conducts an adult mixed choir, is also involved with both amateur and professional choirs.

**Table 2.** *The design process of conducting for choir directors*

Process Steps		Awareness	Trainings and Participation in Scientific / Artistic Activities	Organising Workshops and Training	Participating in training and activities related to the choir
Becoming a Choirmaster		P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6	X	X
		X	X	P1	P1, P5, P6
		X	X	X	X

Table 2 outlines the steps taken by choir conductors in their journey to becoming conductors and establishing a choir. Under the design process of conducting, it is evident that all participants consciously took their first steps towards becoming choir conductors. Accordingly, it can be said that the participants had a high level of awareness regarding their decision to become choir conductors. Drawing from this awareness, it is observed that they participated in training and scientific/artistic events to develop themselves (P1, P2, P4, P5, P6). In the interviews, P1 mentioned organizing workshops and training sessions during the choir formation process, as well as participating in education and events related to choirs. P3, however, did not participate in training and scientific/artistic events during the process of becoming a choir conductor, nor in organizing workshops, training, and participating in choir-related activities during the choir formation process.

Regarding the process of becoming a choir conductor:

P1 stated, *"While I was a violin instructor at Trabzon Fine Arts High School, teachers who were interested took the choir class. I would join the classes to help. I realized that there was a greater lack in conducting rather than training the choir in the classes I attended with pleasure."*

P2 indicated that their initial work related to choirs began with vocal coaching, stating, *"...I saw that the conductors were doing things differently from what I thought was right in the vocal exercises I led... It actually started with the thought, 'What if I conducted my own choir and made the music I wanted?'"*



P3 expressed, *"I actually decided to become a choir conductor by singing in choirs,"* and emphasized their preference for conducting as a means of musical expression by saying, *"I chose conducting as a way to make and express music, by leading a choir myself."*

P4 explained their awareness in becoming a choir conductor by stating, *"We formed a choir in high school, and when I decided to study music while preparing for university, I realized that choir had guided my life, and after singing in many choirs, I took an individual decision that this was my passion."*

P5 noted that initially participated in children's choirs and said, *"I was singing in the choir. That's when it caught my interest."* Based on their observations at concerts and festivals they attended, P5 stated, *"One choir sings, the next year another choir sings the same things. It's always the same... So, I wanted to do different things myself,"* thus providing information about their decision-making process in becoming a conductor.

P6 said, *"...I had a goal and dream of forming a group that could convey all the experience from being a chorister,"* and after giving vocal training to a choir, stated, *"Then I said, why not have a choir of my own?"*

Regarding the process of becoming a choir conductor, it is seen that the majority of the conductors actively participated in training and scientific/artistic events to develop themselves:

P1 stated, *"I first attended training by the Music Advanced Research Association in Istanbul... Then I started attending all the training and masterclasses I could find... I tried to participate in as many events, festivals, and choral music symposia organized by the State Polyphonic Choir as possible and learn something from every conductor."*

P2 mentioned, *"...I saw the Children's Choir Conductors Academy by Atilla and attended the workshop held in Iskenderun in November 2022. There, I learned a bit more about basic conducting techniques and got more involved in the process."*

P4 shared, *"...I asked for help from choir conductors, from the conductors of many choirs I participated in as a chorister, and asked them to guide me and provide training."*

P5 said, *"While studying at the conservatory, we started working with our late esteemed conductor Muzaffer Arıkan... Even outside of classes, we had many dialogues and exchanged ideas with Muzaffer,"* and added, *"I also worked with the late Hikmet Şimşek and accompanied the choir programs he conducted on TRT."*

P6 stated, *"My teachers Atilla Çağdaş Değer and Çiğdem Aytepe were my professors at the university... I built a foundation with them by attending various festivals both domestically and internationally and receiving training."*

Regarding the choir formation process, it is observed that only one participant organized individual activities such as workshops and training related to choirs. In this context, P1 mentioned inviting Çiğdem Aytepe and Atilla Çağdaş Değer to the school they worked at to hold a choir workshop and later inviting Ayşe Meral Töreyin to give vocal training, organizing training within this scope. Half of the conductors participated in choir-related training and events during this process.

In this regard:

P5 mentioned that based on their observations from the events they attended, they concluded that choirs had the same repertoire and thus wanted to *"do different things"* and tried to realize them.

**Table 3.** Management process in choir creation

Planning	Programming	Implementation
P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6	P1, P3, P4, P5	P1, P3, P4, P5

Table 3 provides information about the plans, programming, and implementations made by the conductors during the choir formation process. It is observed that P1, P3, P4, and P5 fully executed the steps of planning, programming, and implementation within the management process, whereas P2 and P6 only engaged in planning during the choir formation process.

Regarding the planning process in forming a choir:

P1 stated, *"I don't let go of those with a good voice, good ear, and good musical sensitivity."*

P2 mentioned, *"People with good voices and good musical ears are important. One of the important things in forming the choir, I think, is the personality of the people. I pay attention to having disciplined, hardworking, and harmonious individuals who are willing to be in the choir voluntarily... Another important factor is age. For example, it is important to form the choir in a way that is suitable for the age of the young people and children."*

P3 said, *"Everyone needs to hear and showcase their talent in a certain way... I conduct exams to measure the ability to distinguish many sounds and suitability for polyphony... The choir members need to be at a certain level initially... So, being harmonious and having good communication is particularly important to me."*

P4 explained, *"When forming the choir, if I am the one setting it up, because a single conductor cannot form a choir alone, I determine who is coming, who wants to be in the choir, and who wants to sing in this choir, and I make a plan accordingly... I pay attention to one more thing, which is the number. Because in amateur choirs, it is crucial, in my opinion, to exceed approximately twenty people."*

P5 expressed, *"...We work with everyone who wants to develop and be involved in this field... First, I check if they are suitable for that structure... We pay attention to being homogeneous while singing, and I have to be mindful of this structurally as well... The aim is always to gain individuals."*

P6 mentioned, *"The women's choir is a choir I formed because I really enjoy the sound created by the unity of women's voices... As an educator, I wanted to emphasize and express that everyone can sing within a certain potential framework... I made choices in this regard, seeking people with good ears, regardless of prior choir experience. I wanted to show that development with them over time... I had a thought of preserving that amateur spirit and amateur perception and progressing towards a professional point from the start... I conducted an application exam. In this exam, people joined our choir through various small exercises like sound hearing, singing a small musical motif, and singing duets with some experienced people. When forming the other mixed adult choir, behavior was an important issue for being part of the whole. To analyze this, I had small questions like how they would stand within the choir, whether they were harmonious, open to cooperation, and their attitude towards life and sharing in their social life."*

Regarding the programming and implementation in forming the choir:

P1 stated, *"Under normal circumstances, I always pay attention to the balance of alto, soprano, and bass. I pay attention to the balanced formation of these voices for good harmony. But unfortunately, you can't do that here. It can be very difficult in an amateur choir because the choir members are adults and usually people over forty."*

P3 said, *"The members of both choirs must be appropriate for the balance and identity of the choirs. Each member should have an equal and balanced voice, and their abilities, potential, and what they can do should be more or less the same for everyone."*

P4 explained, *"I choose the repertoire according to who is singing in the choir and plan the direction and training of the choir, the musical education within the choir accordingly... The more people are side by side, the more they can trust each other and learn in a comfortable environment."*

P5 stated, *"While conducting a choir, it is important to introduce and make them love it, and to have minimal loss."*

**Table 4.** *The conductors' first experiences in leading a choir*

Participant	Preliminary Preparation	Pre-Performance Trend	Environment	Post-Performance Trend	Targets
P1	Individual Rehearsal	Excitement	Masterclass	Enjoyment	Ensuring sustainability
P2	Group Rehearsal within the Framework of Planning for Aural Skills	Providing motivation	Concert	x	Rehearse more often
P3	Analyzing the Choir and the Piece Based on the Selected Work	Systematic study	Concert, festival	Idealistic approach	Concert realisation
P4	Design of the Rehearsal Process	Systematic study	x	x	Creating a working system for the whole season and analysing this system
P5	Conducting vocal exercises, breathing exercises, solfeggio, and ear training	Mission fulfilment	International festivals	Awareness raising	Ensuring sustainability
P6	Needs analysis for individuals and the choir	Creating a work schedule	x	x	Crisis management in line with the needs

Table 4 provides information about the conductors' experiences in leading a choir for the first time. According to the interviews, P1 and P6 conducted individual rehearsals during the preparation phase to develop themselves and improve the quality of their work, while P3 and P4 followed a systematic working schedule before the performance. It was observed that P1, P2, P3, and P5 participated in various concerts, masterclasses, and festivals. P1 expressed satisfaction and enjoyment from their work post-performance, while P3 exhibited an idealistic approach to advancing the choir. P5 aimed to create awareness within the choir, based on the conductor's mission. It was also noted that P1 and P5 had goals for the sustainability of the choir, P2 aimed for frequent rehearsals, P3 for concert performances, P4 for creating and analyzing a working system, and P6 for managing crises according to the needs of the choir.

Regarding the conductors' views on preparation:

P1 stated, *"I conducted many choirs along with the orchestra while training students in classes."*

P2 mentioned, *"I thought about what I wanted to hear from this choir and planned formats and studies accordingly... We formed a repertoire of pieces the choir was familiar with and worked on them in detail..."*



P3 said, *"First, I select all the pieces that will make up the repertoire... First, I take the pieces we will perform at the festival or concert, listen to them a lot to internalize them. Then I work on my own score on paper, thinking about what I can do, what the choir members can do, what we can add to the piece, and what we can interpret in it... I analyze the pieces myself to aim for that goal. Afterward, I transfer as much as I can to the choir members... I honestly followed how other choirs performed the pieces I chose to conduct, what actions their conductors took, and where they were."*

P4 explained, *"When I first conducted an entire choir rehearsal on my own, I used to plan everything in detail from the beginning, hour by hour, minute by minute, what I would work on, what I would do during the warm-up, which piece I would move to, what aspect of the piece I would work on, and how I would start teaching a new piece if I introduced one. I would make plans in at least two pages like that."*

P5 shared, *"You must act in a planned and organized manner. Because a choir is not a daily thing... I first set aside the pieces. I started with vocal exercises, breathing exercises, which are very important, and then moved on to solfeggio and ear training. Until they reached a certain maturity... Ear, solfeggio, and vocal exercises. Then we gradually transitioned to polyphony with simple arrangements."*

P6 stated, *"Before forming the choir, I had already started planning and programming because I knew I would be facing an amateur group. So I created a study schedule considering things like how to convey the material, what my preparation should be before working on a piece, what kind of pieces I should select, what my boundaries should be, and what the initial sensory needs are. Should I have alternatives, and what should those alternatives be?"*

Regarding tendencies before and after the performance:

P1 expressed their excitement before the performance: *"When I went to MiAM's event, where I conducted a choir alone for the first time, I actively participated there and conducted our performance on stage. It was the first and a very difficult piece. I was very excited and very happy."* Post-performance, P1 stated, *"I conducted there alone for the first time. And I really enjoyed it. After doing that, you can't think of anything else, and you want to continue it because hearing that polyphony gives me immense pleasure."*

P2 did not express any post-performance tendencies but indicated a tendency to increase motivation before the performance: *"I helped the choir bond with small choir games and a bit of drama."*

P4 only commented on pre-performance tendencies: *"...and I tried to stick to that plan as much as possible, focusing on punctuality and the things I needed to do there."*

P6, like P2 and P4, only provided information about pre-performance tendencies: *"...since I knew I would be facing an amateur group, I created a study schedule considering what my preparation should be before working on a piece, what type of piece I should select, what my boundaries should be, and what the initial sensory needs are."*

P3, speaking of both pre and post-performance tendencies, highlighted an idealistic approach: *"To develop myself, I first worked independently of others and then went to conduct the choir. Because I know it is a very important job."*

P5 said, *"From the moment I started with the choir, I need to consider the long term, the future as a whole. Therefore, it is important to know and teach some basic information... I formed the first choir. Of course, I checked if we could sing a piece... We are doing these things as a mission... I first set aside the pieces. I started with vocal exercises, breathing exercises, which are very important, and then moved on to solfeggio and ear training. Until they reached a certain maturity, and during that time, some people got bored. P5 said, 'We want to sing, when will we start?' During that time, I entertained them, explained, and convinced them that it would be better, doing fundamental work for a long time."* Thus, demonstrating a tendency to raise awareness within the choir post-performance.

Regarding the conductors' goals for the choirs they formed:

P1 shared, *"The first time I participated in a masterclass, I conducted a choir alone for the first time. I really enjoyed it. After doing that, you can't think of anything else, and you want to continue it."* This indicates a goal of sustaining the choir.

P2 expressed a goal to improve the choir's level with more rehearsals, saying, "...for two months, I don't want to do any concerts; I just want to bring the choir to the point I desire with rehearsals."

P3 stated, "The dates of our concerts are always set in advance, we always have a goal. I always try to design processes in that way." indicating a goal of performing concerts.

P4 mentioned, "...by putting those plans together, I see it as the choir's curriculum for that year (that season), and I also do a retrospective analysis of what I did and could have done," indicating a goal of creating a working system for the entire season and analyzing that system.

P5 expressed the importance of a strong foundation and steady progress, saying, "...since these studies are a process that includes the future, it is not about moving quickly but rather about building a solid foundation and continuing in that way."

P6 stated, "...in the journey I started, I had a work plan and program that would prepare me for any situation that might arise," indicating a goal of crisis management and being prepared for potential crises according to the choir's needs.

**Table 5.** *The choir conductors' repertoire formation process*

		Categories										
		Musical Appreciation	Mission Assertion	Choir Level	Empathising	Increasing Motivation, Self-Confidence	Self-assessment	Readiness, Requirements, Awareness	Musicality and Repertoire Diversity	Arranging, Transposing and Composing	Leveraging Experience	Environment
Process Steps	Repertoire Design Process	P1 P4	P2	P6	P3	P6	P3	P4	x	x	P5	x
	Repertoire Creation Process	x	x	P1,P 3P4	x	x	x	P5, P6	P1,P3, P6	P1, P3, P5	P2	x
	Repertoire Application Process	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x x	x	P1

Table 5 presents information based on the conductors' statements regarding their processes of repertoire formation, including repertoire design, formation, and implementation. According to this, it is observed that P3 implemented strategies for empathizing with the choir members and self-evaluation in the repertoire design process. P4 attempted to create awareness by considering the choir members' musical tastes, readiness, and needs. It can be said that K6 entered a design process aimed at boosting motivation and ensuring self-confidence while considering the choir's level. In the repertoire formation process, the conductors (P1, P3, P5, P6) focused heavily on creating strategies related to musical and repertoire diversity, arrangement, transposition and composition. The conductors (P1, P3, P4, P5, P6) managed the repertoire formation process by selecting pieces appropriate to the choir's level and considering the members' readiness, needs, and awareness. P5 indicated that they benefited from previous experiences in the repertoire design process, while P2 mentioned using experiences in the repertoire formation process. Additionally, P1 provided information about the implementation process of the repertoire, including the location of events and the city where the choir operates.

Participants' views on the implementation of the process steps are as follows:

P1 explained that in the design process, they tried to ensure musical and repertoire diversity by considering the musical tastes of the choir members and using methods such as arranging, transposing, and composing pieces. Regarding the implementation process of the formed repertoire, P1 mentioned

the influence of the environment on repertoire formation, stating, *"They also want to sing what they like... The choir members have suggestions, and you have to listen to them... Also, I make arrangements according to the choir's level, according to their vocal colors... The structure of my choir shows this. Because the existing songs are sometimes too high or the vocal ranges are too wide for the level of my choir. I try to balance that... There is a Greek culture here, you know... I always include one or two Greek songs... For a concert in a church, there must be an Ave Maria."*

P2 indicated that they managed the repertoire design process with the awareness of being a choir conductor and formed the repertoire by benefiting from the experiences of composers and previous conductors. They stated, *"Ruhi Su's pieces or those he collected are our priority. There is already an existing repertoire. We can consult with composers about making them polyphonic... Some of the previous conductors of our choir also have compositions written for the choir. We actually consider these."*

P3 mentioned that they empathized with the choir members and performed self-evaluation in the repertoire design process, leading to creating strategies for arranging, transposing, and composing pieces according to the choir's level. This ensured musical and repertoire diversity. P3 stated, *"You have answers in your mind to questions like what the choir members want to sing, what I want to conduct as a choir conductor, what I want to interpret... We look at the balance and level of the choir members, but sometimes I choose pieces that won't tire them too much or challenge them a bit more, depending on the choir's situation... I actually create a mixed repertoire that includes Turkish and world choir pieces. We sing folk song arrangements. And we always have a few church pieces... Because I want the repertoire to be versatile."*

P4 explained that they applied strategies focusing on the musical tastes, readiness, needs, and awareness of the choir members in the design process, thereby forming a repertoire appropriate to the choir's level. They stated, *"I always give something a little beyond what the choir wants and can do... Since singing is done with the human body and voice and psychology has a great impact, I think that when we push people too hard and want them to do things they can't, we harm them both psychologically and physically. Therefore, I try to chart my path by selecting popular pieces that can attract their attention... Because I think it's necessary to be a little careful to bring together such different groups of people and make a choir."*

P5 mentioned benefiting from experiences in repertoire design, forming the repertoire by arranging, transposing, and composing pieces according to the choir's readiness, needs, and awareness. They said, *"After we started working, we tried to form a repertoire according to our structure and development... We selected pieces suitable for our development. Of course, based on my previous experiences with piano, during my time as a piano student and teacher, I always aimed to work on pieces that were not very advanced but achievable to gain something. I got a lot of efficiency from this... With what they learned from those pieces, we moved on to a more advanced repertoire... I made arrangements and composed pieces to relax sometimes. We formed our repertoire based on the difficulty level of the classical choir repertoire and the level we had reached."*

P6 stated that in the repertoire design process, they paid attention to selecting pieces suitable for the choir's level and applied strategies aimed at increasing the members' motivation and self-confidence. Thus, they ensured musical and repertoire diversity according to the choir members' readiness, needs, and awareness. They explained, *"...First, I select the repertoire according to my choir's potential. There are many interconnected balances, like the number of people in the choir, their potential, and a bit of their awareness level... The first year is more about preparation, getting to know, understand, and grasp, and while everything is taking shape within its potential... I had an approach that increased the choir's work and made them feel like 'we can do this.' So, I reflected all of these in the repertoire. Of course, I also categorized them. I formed one block with religious pieces, another with folk song arrangements, and so on, and a more contemporary category. Based on the choir's level and their reactions during the rehearsal process, I created an order."*

**Table 6.** *The communication strategies of choir conductors with the choir*

	Participants					
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Strategies	-Appointing an Artistic Director	-Utilizing Communication Tools	-Utilizing Communication Tools	-Appointing a Coordinator	-Providing Recorded Accompaniment	-Providing Instructor Support
	-Managing the Choir Member Recruitment Process	-Conducting Self-Assessment	-Organizing Social Activities	-Utilizing Communication Tools	-Utilizing Communication Tools	-Utilizing Communication Tools
	-Appointing a Piano Accompanist	-Organizing Social Activities	-Creating a Disciplined Working Environment	-Creating a Disciplined Working Environment	-Creating a Disciplined Working Environment	-Conducting Self-Assessment
	-Providing Recorded Accompaniment			-Organizing Social Activities	-Conducting Self-Assessment	-Organizing Social Activities
	-Offering Instructor Support				-Organizing Social Activities	-
	-Utilizing Communication Tools				-	Implementing Imagination Exercises
	-Creating a Disciplined Working Environment				Implementing Imagination Exercises	
	-Organizing Social Activities					

Table 6 presents the communication strategies implemented by choir conductors to make their choirs more effective. Based on the conductors' statements, the table highlights the prioritized aspects. Accordingly, it is observed that all conductors interact with the choir members using various communication tools (such as social media, digital applications). Additionally, creating and providing an environment for social activities is among the strategies employed by all conductors. P1, P3, P4, and P5 discussed implementing their discipline within the choir and creating a disciplined working environment. P2, P5, and P6 are noted to have engaged in self-assessment within the choir. Strategies such as sharing ideas, discussions before, during, and after rehearsals and concerts, and evaluations by choir members are utilized. P1 and P5 mentioned conducting preliminary studies with recorded accompaniments during choir rehearsals. P1 and P6 also provide instructor support within the choir. P5 and P6 have conducted imagination exercises based on choir repertoire and performance. Unique strategies include P1 appointing an artistic director and piano accompanist, and creating mechanisms for managing the choir member recruitment process; P4 has appointed a coordinator.

Regarding creating social activities within the choir:

P1 stated, *"I organize events to make the choir attractive. For example, we participated in some art activities here. We do advertising there..."*

P2 mentioned, *"After the rehearsal, we always have tea or coffee and chat with the choir members who are available... We always go somewhere after concerts... We create a space where everyone plays and sings along with their instruments. We have such a social activity."*

P3 explained, *"After rehearsal and concerts, we always go somewhere. We do something. We talk about choirs, concerts, or other different things. So, for example, we do our work and also spend as much time socially as we can."*

P4 said, *"I suggest to the choir members... After one of our rehearsals, we can just sit down, have tea, and sing songs together with guitars... After concerts, we organize activities, entertainment, and evening gatherings to relieve people's stress without answering questions about the concert."*

P5 stated, *"Of course, we have different social activities. Meals, trips, picnics depending on the weather, different sharing..."*

P6 noted, *"After every concert, we definitely have an event, we go somewhere to have fun, or there is some sort of gathering. Also, something has developed in the choir now; even without me or our choir's organizer arranging a social activity, the choir has started organizing small events on their own."*

Regarding the conductors implementing their discipline within the choir and creating a disciplined working environment:

P1 mentioned, *"I am a bit strict about attendance. When choir members miss two or three rehearsals, we sometimes contact them through the communication group we set up and inform them that we can't continue working with them because we require regular attendance in our choir... Since most of the choir members are retired people, they frequently get involved in other activities, which can negatively impact my communication with them. Therefore, I have to constantly keep track of them... They really think they are doing something special, and in my opinion, they are. Because at first, they all said, 'We can't do this, how will we do it?' Now they are helping the newcomers... They have started to realize how to make polyphonic music. But it took a lot of time."*

P3 said, *"Time is very important for us during rehearsals. The biggest concern is having issues related to punctuality. But when this is communicated well at the beginning, choir members usually don't have any problems with it, and neither do I."*

P4 explained, *"During rehearsals, I usually focus on the rehearsal and the plan I wrote and try to implement it... I give directions as a conductor in rehearsals and social activities... Before the concert, in the rehearsal before the concert and the final rehearsal, I usually explain very carefully what we need to do, and I present a slightly more serious attitude."*

P5 added, *"We never allow social activities to overshadow the work. Because, first and foremost, our foundation there is music. Because we are under the umbrella of music, we can do many things. That's why one of the most important things in our work is continuity... Although it is called an amateur choir, the work is professional. This is the same everywhere in the world... After doing all the work in detail until the concert, the experiences we gain at the concert benefit us for the next concerts. That's how we work."*

Regarding self-assessment:

P2 stated, *"After the first concert, or rather, I conducted a digital survey with a few questions to understand what the choir members and the conductor expect... Therefore, if they feel there is a problem, we can still discuss it via message or face-to-face... Then we say, let's not talk about our performance for the first twenty minutes, whether it was good or bad, and then let's evaluate it together."*

P5 expressed, *"First of all, you need to have a choir mentality. This is not an understanding where people from different places, professions, families, and cultures can come together and sing. Therefore, social activities are important. It is important for people to get to know each other, meet in courtesy and respect. Because there are many people... No matter how much you rehearse, there are so many factors like the excitement of the concert, the difference in the environment, the change in acoustics, that sometimes things that have been rehearsed can't be performed at the concert. My personal attitude is that any mistake*



can happen at the concert. In my opinion, there should never be any sensitivity or aggressiveness about these. That's how I behave and act."

P6 mentioned, "I usually get feedback that my energy is high... After the concerts, we generally do an evaluation... Because I always tell the choir, if you have thoughts about yourself or the choir in general that you felt or observed after the concert, please take notes immediately without letting time pass. They come with those notes, I share my notes, and so on. We go through a process of reflective thinking... I especially prioritize out-of-town plans. Because everyone in the choir is in the same conditions there, so the sense of unity, being strong together, is very prominent... By adding out-of-town plans and events, I aim to make the choir members feel not only through singing but also on a human level."

Regarding preliminary studies with recorded accompaniment:

P1 stated, "We also have a demo group we created through digital communication. I make sure to play and record songs, especially challenging pieces with chromatic passages or sustained notes, with the piano and send them to the choir members, asking them to listen to them constantly. I especially don't encourage singing, but I share them through our demo group so they become familiar with the sounds. We usually rehearse at least once a week, sometimes twice, before the rehearsals."

P5 shared, "But it's not about sending the recording and asking them to practice on their own. I teach them first. Because incorrect things can develop unknowingly in the recording. When that happens, correcting them is, of course, more difficult. I teach the parts first and then send the recordings from time to time to prevent them from forgetting and to refer back to."

Regarding providing instructor support within the choir:

P1 mentioned, "I occasionally conduct solfège exercises... We also work on demos."

P6 stated, "As I mentioned before, because I love teaching so much, I try to provide this support by paying attention to my approach to the choir members to offer permanent education."

Regarding imagination exercises based on choir repertoire and performance:

P5 shared, "Sometimes, for example, I ask people to read a book, recommend it, explain its main idea, and then we discuss it. Or they can bring up a different thesis, and we discuss it. Of course, I share the things I know. This creates and develops a serious understanding... Sometimes we have long discussions about the piece, the composer, the period. Knowing this, what was the composer thinking when writing the piece, what was happening at that time, what was the thought process? Thoughts are like fashion because they change over time and take on different forms with new contributions. When we make music, we are also time traveling. We sing pieces from the 1600s and 1700s as if we were living in those times, trying to understand and be part of them. These make the quality of the piece much more realistic."

P6 noted, "I love describing things when giving examples or working on a piece. I mean, in their imagination and memory, whatever phrase, nuance, or tempo term I want to work on, it can be anything... I always tell the choir, after the concert, if you have any thoughts about yourself or the choir in general, please take notes immediately without letting time pass. They come with those notes, I share my notes, and so on. We go through a process of reflective thinking."

Regarding unique strategies such as appointing an artistic director, piano accompanist, managing the choir member recruitment process, and appointing a coordinator:

P1 mentioned, "We have an artistic director. A retired music teacher friend of ours provides piano accompaniment. Together, we first set our criteria for choir auditions. Then, we collect applications through a digital survey and conduct the initial evaluation process."

P4 stated, "...Since I will focus on music, I assign people within the choir to provide social activities."

**Table 7.** *The crisis management process of choir conductors*

Participant	Unexpected Situation	Situation Management	Solution/Outcome
P1	Encountering bureaucratic obstacles	Change in concert name, repertoire, and participating choir	The concert taking place
P2	Decision by the governing NGO	Notifying that the decision can not be implemented by keeping communication channels open	The inability to implement the board's decision
P3	Unexpected situation during a concert	Focusing immediately on management techniques and drawing the full attention of the choir	Continuation of the concert
P4	Sudden Change in rehearsal times and content	Revising the existing plan	Continuing the rehearsal by updating the plan
P5	Sudden change in choir dynamics	Trying various methods to find the appropriate approach	Ensuring the efficiency of the choir practice
P6	Issues encountered in the implementation of the selected repertoire	Selecting a repertoire suitable for vocal type and intonation	Creating an updated repertoire

Table 7 outlines the crisis management processes employed by the participants in response to unexpected situations encountered during concerts, rehearsals, and general choir management. It is observed that all participants faced unexpected situations and devised solutions to overcome these crises. The information gathered indicates that these solutions helped them successfully manage the crises. According to the findings, P1 and P3's solutions to unexpected situations before and during concerts ensured that the concerts took place and continued. The unexpected situations encountered by other participants did not show similarities.

Regarding the occurrence and continuation of the concert, the unexpected situation, situation management, and solution/outcome are as follows:

P1 stated, *"Last year, we planned a concert with three choirs... Three choirs from different institutions, including my own choir, were supposed to perform together. We also chose a common piece to sing together... However, due to some issues in inter-institutional correspondence, two choirs had to withdraw, leaving only our choir. As a result, we had prepared the pieces accordingly, because three choirs wouldn't have been able to sing thirty or forty songs together. We planned to perform four pieces each. Since the situation turned out this way, we had four pieces prepared, and a few more we had been working on... We sang three pieces with piano accompaniment. We quickly reviewed a piece we had worked on the previous year. We also included the piece we were supposed to sing together, adding a total of five more, and we performed the concert with nine pieces. But ultimately, we managed to overcome the situation."*

P3 mentioned, *"In the situation I'm talking about, actually, with a directive I gave, during the first beat when fifteen or sixteen people were supposed to enter (during the concert), only one of our friends from the altos started the piece. Such situations are indeed a crisis moment... In such moments, my way of resolving the crisis is always to immediately communicate. I enlarge my movements, give them more confidently so that they feel confident, start the piece confidently, and feel that what they are doing is not wrong, but rather what I want. For me, it's important for them to feel that. I definitely make my movements bigger. So, according to the number of beats I give, I make more confident and clearer gestures and try to*

*establish eye contact with as many people as possible in the choir as quickly as possible. It can be a nod, a wink, whatever it takes. I try to show them that what they are doing is right, providing the confidence they need, and I show it with my facial expressions so that they don't think they are doing something wrong and continue with confidence. This is how we resolve such situations."*

Regarding the inability to implement the board's decision:

*P2 stated, "The board of the institution my choir is affiliated with had some requests regarding the choir. I told them that it couldn't be done at the moment. The choir is approaching its fiftieth year, and they were considering making an album. Even though our choir is good, I felt there were issues like intonation problems and insufficient voice balance, so I said that this request couldn't be fulfilled in the current situation. Although the management was not initially convinced, I resolved this disagreement with the open communication I established... In such musical matters, the conductor is the decision-maker; the institution can only offer suggestions... Our problem was solved through conversation."*

Regarding continuing the rehearsal by updating the plan:

*P4 mentioned, "As a choir conductor, besides having a fixed plan for my choir practices, I always have a plan that I can adjust or update... I immediately redesign the plan in my head accordingly. For example, when starting a rehearsal, if out of a twenty-member choir, five cannot come due to various reasons (traffic, rain, etc.), I have to revise my plan rather than rewriting the pre-written plan... Sometimes, I haven't been able to implement a plan I made at all. But I believe that making the plan is what's important."*

Regarding ensuring the efficiency of the choir practice:

*P5 stated, "For example, winter, summer vacations, leaves, illnesses can negatively affect our practice. During the season, the work situations and responsibilities of our choir members can change. These require constant rethinking... Sometimes extra rehearsals, sometimes individual practices, sometimes changes within the choir; for example, the variety of parts can decrease, especially with male voices. Because unfortunately, in our country, men do not prefer polyphonic music as a hobby very much... I often had to supplement the tenor section with members from the alto section. Or sometimes, again with altos, I had to support the second sopranos with members who could adapt more easily to the high notes... We have to change, adjust the parts. Since the female voices are more numerous, I separate them into first and second parts, soprano and alto within themselves. Sometimes I have to merge the male voices into a single voice. Since it's uncertain where the problem will arise from, it's necessary to always be prepared, think about it, and immediately go in that direction after the problem arises. Because the problem can appear in many ways. It may even be unforeseen. But practices must continue. That's why whatever problem arises, we find and try different methods within the choir to overcome it."*

Regarding creating an updated repertoire:

*P6 mentioned, "Since my choir is a women's choir, we initially had some difficulties in selecting the repertoire. I even had to withdraw some pieces... Because I had an alternative plan, I solved the situation by implementing the alternative plan, setting the right range, and balancing the voices according to the choir members' potential, ensuring it did not affect their vocal health, and resolving the crisis I faced."*

**Table 8.** The conductors' views on the sustainability of the choir

Views	Participant
Conductors frequently engage in self-assessment (attitude, behavior, technique, etc.)	P1, P5, P6
Ensuring diversity within the choir	P1
Working towards fostering a sense of belonging in the choir	P2, P3, P4, P5

Maintaining balance in the number and types of vocal groups	P1
Paying attention to the diversity of the repertoire	P1, P3, P4, P5
Training an assistant conductor	P1
Ensuring diversity in venues	P1, P3, P6
Ensuring variety in events	P1, P3, P5, P6
Working towards increasing the number of supporting institutions, organizations, and independent individuals	P1, P3, P5, P6
Utilizing social media support	P1

Table 8 contains the conductors' views on the sustainability of the choir. The predominant views include: working on fostering a sense of belonging within the choir (P2, P3, P4, P5), emphasizing the importance of repertoire diversity (P1, P3, P4, P5), ensuring variety in events, and efforts to increase supporting institutions, organizations, and independent individuals through a collaborative approach (P1, P3, P5, P6). It is also noted that frequent self-assessment by the conductors (P1, P5, P6) and ensuring diversity in the venues where the choir performs (P1, P3, P6) are among the prominent views. Additional aspects highlighted for sustainability include ensuring choir diversity, balancing the number and types of vocal groups, training an assistant conductor, and utilizing social media support (P1).

Regarding fostering a sense of belonging within the choir for sustainability:

P2: *"We are trying to rejuvenate the choir for continuity... I think holding auditions is the first step... By assigning specific tasks to our more prominent (better) choir members, we focus on turning the choir into a truly collective structure, ensuring it remains sustainable by keeping more solos within the choir and making the members feel a sense of ownership."*

P3: *"I try to make everyone love the choir and value their opinions. They notice this... If they know and feel how valuable what we do is, which I think is something a choir conductor should do. I believe it is essential to give them a purpose, as this contributes to sustainability... Sending nice messages to the group to encourage choir members to attend rehearsals and not miss our good moments are just a few of my approaches... If you make them feel that we are doing this together and everyone has a contribution, and they know this, then maintaining the choir is not difficult at all... So, I think the most crucial step I take toward ensuring the choir's sustainability is always trying to convey a message, a purpose, and encouraging choir members to attend rehearsals and perform in a concert."*

P4: *"Especially in amateur choirs, I think the key to sustainability lies in the communication among people and the enjoyment they get from spending time together during rehearsals, concerts, and tours. The more the conductor can facilitate this, the better."*

P5: *"Continuity is critical. We are planning for the future with choir practices. It is essential to always keep in mind how beautiful it is to be together, to share, and to learn from each other, always within the framework of respect."*

Regarding the importance of repertoire diversity:

P1: *"For this year's concert program, I'm considering including pop songs in the second half. With three or four songs, I want it to be a fun and interactive concert where the audience can also participate in the second half. It's a way to increase interest."*

P3: *"Setting an overseas goal and working towards it with a new repertoire... It could be a piece we all love, maybe a Turkish song or any other piece. Working in that direction and diversifying the repertoire could contribute to maintaining the choir."*

P4: *"It's also essential to advance expectations in music. This year, we sang this piece; next year, we can expand our boundaries a little and discover other things. For example, if we haven't sung in Hungarian before, we will do it this time, or if we haven't sung in two or three parts, we will try it this time."*

P5: *"I believe that the way to maintain the enthusiasm of the choir members is through concerts. Concerts always motivate. So, to raise us higher, we take on an extra mission to create a beautiful concert program and make people understand and feel the responsibility for it."*

Regarding ensuring variety in events and working on increasing supporting institutions, organizations, and independent individuals through a collaborative approach:

P1: *"There was a cultural festival in the city where I live. We gave a concert... We organized an event on November 10 with the teachers' choir, my adult choir, and my students... Last year, I talked to the municipality about making my choir a municipal choir. I wanted to use the municipality's name and have them provide a place for our rehearsals. I am trying to introduce my choir to senior officials to get support... A social responsibility project came up. There is a choir, orchestra, and children's choir. They asked if I could form a youth choir this year. I was thrilled. Because those who grow up from there might join the other choir in the future, there will be a circulation. They can move from the children's choir to the youth choir and from the youth choir to the adult choir. At least I want to create such a cycle. Since I formed this choir, another polyphonic choir has been established... We set an example... If it's children or youth, you can find support somehow. But everyone in my choir is an adult. It is a bit harder to find support because they are adults. Maybe we could gather under the name of an association in the future... The cultural festival I mentioned earlier was a beautiful festival entirely based on workshops. Maybe if we do something like that, we can pressure the municipality a bit more to ensure the continuation of this festival, at least in terms of getting the municipality's support."*

P3: *"We do concerts, meet and sing together, go on picnics, sing our pieces together, etc... We are considering affiliating with an association. There are some advantages that this can provide for us and our choir members. Being affiliated with a place, knowing we have their support, is a good thing... I think this will also have a positive reflection on the choir members."*

P5: *"At international festivals, we take on an extra mission. We represent our country... The praise and compliments we receive are certainly a source of pride. When we show and explain this responsibility to our choir members, it becomes a significant factor in the continuity of the choir. Besides, we don't only perform at international festivals. We also do social responsibility concerts within our country. There are associations and foundations that benefit from these. I especially see this as very important for the good education of girls... All these have allowed us to continue our choir for thirteen years, purely on a voluntary basis."*

P6: *"I believe that more concerts, more projects, and bringing our choir members together with important people from the choir world, such as a composer or a vocal trainer, an opera singer, will ensure continuity. Therefore, I aim to increase these activities in the coming season and years."*

Regarding frequent self-assessment by conductors:

P1: *"You can probably guess the egos of musicians. For example, I have never had such an ego. I want to sing in another choir. Singing a lot or singing in a choir is always something that develops and makes you happy. I think we need to look at it this way... As a conductor, sometimes you find yourself singing something you never wanted to say, and you also have to consider their opinions sometimes... I think it requires a lot of effort to include men in the choir... Other than that, the essential thing is that the choir is always unifying and beautiful. I mean, I love that it has a lot of unifying power."*

P5: *"Amateur choirs come on a voluntary basis, so it may require more patience not to lose people."*



P6: *"First of all, of course, my goal is to reach a good level musically. I have a point I want to take them to musically. I have target pieces, like any conductor, or I have things I want to work on regarding myself and my conducting."*

Regarding ensuring diversity in the venues where the choir performs:

P1: *"Last year, I included my choir in the November 10 Atatürk Commemoration events. The ceremony was at our school. We formed a choir with the students and teachers... We struggle a lot, even to get a concert hall... For example, we really wanted to do a concert in a church."*

P3: *"I think the choir members should have a purpose, like participating in a festival. I mean, having environments where they can also showcase their work is crucial for maintaining the choir."*

P6: *"It's important for them to discover many stages and participate in many events. For example, it could be a festival or a joint concert. I want them to experience stage culture and various atmospheres."*

Regarding ensuring choir diversity, balancing the number and types of vocal groups, training an assistant conductor, and utilizing social media support:

P1: *"The choir at the fine arts high school started working this year. The reason they started working is because of me. This makes me very happy because adults are singing polyphonic music, but there wasn't a choir at the fine arts school. It is just beginning to form... Of course, we want to grow our choir, we want it to be bigger. Right now, we are twenty-two people. We used to be a larger group two years ago... I want the choir to be bigger because we have difficulty working on four-part pieces. We worked on one this year, but it was challenging. Because when the groups and numbers are small, if one or two people don't show up, the balance and harmony immediately get disrupted, and you can't work... I want to find an assistant conductor, work with them, train them, and hand over the role of choir conductor to ensure the continuity of the choir... I prepare videos from the beautiful and fun moments of our choir. We have a social media account, and we share them there. The sopranos and altos introduce themselves. I also edit and prepare videos from the concerts and share them on our social media account. At the beginning of the year, I send them to almost all the music teacher friends I know here. I try to do something like, 'Friends, come to the choir, we would love to see you.'"*

## RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It has been determined that choir conductors are eager to form, manage, and advance a choir, are aware of what actions to take in these areas, and regularly participate in training sessions to develop themselves and the choirs they have established. Additionally, they subject themselves to regular evaluations both individually and through feedback from choir members. To establish an amateur polyphonic choir, individuals qualified to be conductors should ideally have prior experience with a choir (either as a choir member or conductor), be keen observers, possess a high level of enthusiasm and awareness, be determined, and develop strategies for regular self-assessment and assessment of the choir. These strategies should be aimed at fostering continuous development.

It has been observed that the planning processes of the polyphonic amateur choirs established by conductors progress in parallel with the steps involved in becoming a choir conductor and forming a choir. In this regard, it has been determined that regular auditions are conducted based on specific criteria for choir member selection. In addition to possessing musical talent and achieving a certain level of aural skills, other criteria include the candidates' awareness levels regarding their involvement in a choir and their understanding of their role, social identity, predisposition, positivism, and compatibility. Conductors of polyphonic amateur choirs should prioritize the structure and development of the choir, the cultivation of a sense of belonging among choir members, the regular measurement of satisfaction levels, and the strengthening of intra-choir communication, taking into account the social identities of the members.

It has been determined that the strategies and management approaches employed by conductors during the processes of becoming a choir conductor and forming a choir, as well as the planning, programming, and implementation steps they applied, were systematically followed in their first

experiences of conducting a choir. The conductors were observed to engage in activities aimed at developing the musical abilities of the choir members, in line with the goals they had set. They consistently conducted these activities before and after performances, undergoing self-assessment at regular intervals to identify needs and work towards making the choir stronger and more advanced than before. It is recommended that conductors leading a polyphonic amateur choir systematically manage the process by identifying the full potential of the choir, periodically assessing needs, and implementing plans and programs accordingly, with careful consideration of both pre- and post-performance phases.

The examination of the repertoire formation process of the conductors revealed a close relationship with choir management strategies. The conductors were found to complete the steps of forming and diversifying the repertoire, taking into account the vocal structures, diversity, musical tastes, needs, readiness, motivation levels, and confidence of the choir members. Additionally, it was observed that the variety of venues and events positively influenced these steps. Therefore, it is suggested that conductors progress in unity with the choir members to ensure appropriate repertoire and musical diversity. It is crucial for conductors to regularly develop themselves, reflecting their accumulated knowledge and experience (approach, composition, arrangement, transposition) in this regard, which is vital for the sustainability of the choir.

It has been observed that the vast majority of choir conductors develop various strategies aimed at enhancing the capacity of the choir members and the overall growth of the choir. Based on this, it is recommended that conductors frequently develop self-assessment methods and techniques by maintaining communication and empathy with the choir members. Imagination exercises aimed at achieving the highest possible performance of the choir's repertoire will also contribute to this development. Integrating post-rehearsal and post-concert critiques into social activities is considered important for choir members to perceive performance more effectively. In this regard, creating an environment where choir members feel a sense of belonging and being part of the social formation of the choir culture is crucial.

Overall, the crisis management applied by the conductors in unexpected situations demonstrates true leadership. Crisis management requires mastery of the choir and the ability to empathize with the choir members. Therefore, it is essential for conductors of polyphonic amateur choirs to pay attention to these aspects.

The production of new strategies by most conductors, by evaluating their own expressions, attitudes, and behaviors, is crucial for their dedication to the choir and the development of their sense of belonging, akin to that of the choir members. Maintaining a high level of empathy, not disregarding the musical preferences and opinions of the choir members, and striving for repertoire diversity play significant roles in ensuring the continuity of the choir. Therefore, it is particularly recommended to pay attention to these aspects for the sustainability of an amateur choir.

## DISCUSSION

This study examines the leadership management strategies of polyphonic amateur choir conductors in Turkey. The research findings indicate that the conductors' leadership styles and strategic decisions significantly impact the sustainability and performance of the choir. These findings are consistent with other studies in the literature.

Firstly, it has been observed that choir conductors generally adopt a democratic leadership style. This finding aligns with Gastil's 1994 study and the research conducted by Carnicer et al. in 2015. Democratic leadership is an approach that encourages active participation of group members in decision-making processes. By adopting this leadership style, choir conductors allow choristers to express themselves and be involved in decision-making processes. This creates a strong sense of commitment among choir members, contributing to the sustainability of the choir. As noted in Gastil's study, democratic leadership enhances participants' motivation and strengthens group cohesion.

Another significant finding of the study is that choir conductors possess strong crisis management skills. When faced with unexpected situations, choir conductors can quickly and effectively devise solutions, ensuring that concerts and rehearsals proceed smoothly. This finding can be related to the concept of transformational leadership as discussed by Jung and Sosik in their 2002 publication. Transformational leaders empower their followers and help them realize their potential. In this context, the adoption of transformational leadership by choir conductors enables them to act effectively in crisis situations.

The careful selection of repertoire by choir conductors is another notable finding of the study. Conductors select pieces appropriate to the choir's level, ensuring musical diversity and enhancing the motivation of the choristers. As highlighted in Hallam's 2001 study, this approach allows students to acquire correct auditory schemas and correct their errors. Additionally, as seen in Leenders' 2010 research, music brands play an important role in creating customer loyalty. Choir conductors also adopt this strategy, attracting audience interest during performances and fostering a strong sense of commitment among choir members.

Finally, the research findings illustrate the efforts of choir conductors to enhance choristers' sense of belonging through social activities. The study by Koivunen and Parush in 2018 demonstrates how choir management can be used to improve leadership practices. Social activities allow choir members to interact with each other, thereby increasing group cohesion and contributing to the sustainability of the choir.

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