The Role of Crisis Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, and Adversity Quotient on the Organizational Agility of Private Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Crises present profound challenges to the survival of private higher education institutions (HEIs). Evaluating their leadership approaches and agility is crucial to sustaining their competitiveness and relevance in advancing access to quality education. This study explored the interrelationships between crisis leadership, emotional intelligence, and adversity quotient in shaping the organizational agility of forty-one (41) private higher education institutions in Region XI. It employed descriptive and correlational designs and analyzed data from 413 academic leaders through total enumeration. Findings showed that academic leaders exhibited high levels of crisis leadership, emotional intelligence, and adversity quotient, especially in their ability to demonstrate compassion and care, maintain self-awareness, and endure through challenges. Private HEIs demonstrated a high level of organizational agility, particularly in their capacity to make timely and sound decisions during difficult situations. Crisis leadership, emotional intelligence, and adversity quotient were found to significantly contribute to organizational agility. Hence, the ability of academic leaders to exhibit strong crisis leadership, emotional intelligence, and resilience is vital for private higher education institutions (HEIs) to overcome and recover from crises effectively.

Keywords: crisis leadership, emotional intelligence, adversity quotient, organizational agility, Pearson's r correlation, Philippine Higher Education Institutions

INTRODUCTION

In a world shaped by crises, private higher education institutions stand among the most vulnerable organizations, bearing profound changes to their stability, sustainability, and survival. Crises such as natural calamities, economic inflation and instabilities, market competition, rapid technological innovations, and the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly impacted the processes and operations of organizations and institutions, putting their agility to the test. Although many institutions have demonstrated resilience and recovered from these challenges, a significant number, particularly in the private sector, have struggled to do so, with some even forced to cease operations, especially during the height of the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic confronted educational institutions with unprecedented challenges, characterized by uncertainties, declining student enrollments, disrupted teaching and learning, health concerns, and heightened financial pressures (Azman & Abdullah, 2020). Particularly in the United States, the pandemic posed a severe threat to private education institutions, where financial vulnerability resulted in the permanent closure of at least 132 schools, as they do not receive dedicated taxpayer funding, unlike their public counterparts (McCluskey, 2021). Tamrat (2020) also revealed that several private higher education institutions in Ethiopia faced increased financial difficulties due to their heavy reliance on student tuition fees.

In the Philippines, some private higher education institutions ceased their operations due to financial instability exacerbated by the pandemic and declining enrollment, as exemplified by the permanent closure of the Colegio

de San Lorenzo in September 2022 (Sarao, 2022). Moreover, in Davao Region, the aftermath of the pandemic was also evident, as fifteen private schools were forced to close, while the Holy Cross College of Davao, a private higher education institution in Davao City, retrenched its employees in late 2020 due to severe financial strain (Llemit, 2020). These facts reveal the extent to which crises can impose vulnerability on private higher education institutions, both globally and locally. This reality, therefore, underscores the need to examine key factors that shape their organizational agility.

During times of crisis, leaders carry the weight of responsibility of steering their organizations through uncertainty and turbulence. Mahmoud (2023) emphasized that the success and survival of organizations largely depend on the leaders' capacity to exercise effective leadership. In the face of complex and challenging circumstances, leaders play a crucial and influential role (Fitaloka et al., 2020), serving as anchors who shape how organizations perceive, address, and adapt to change (Leadership Circle, 2024). Hence, the ability of leaders to develop and cultivate core competencies and skills is essential for ensuring organizational survival during crises.

Among the most vital competencies of leaders during crises are their crisis leadership, emotional intelligence, and adversity quotient, which collectively serve as foundations for building and sustaining organizational agility. Literature suggests that leaders' crisis leadership (Thompson, 2023), emotional intelligence (Mann, 2022), and adversity quotient (Saadu-Wavemaker, 2023) contribute to the development of an agile organization. During a crisis, effective leadership is a key factor in organizational agility and resilience (Strawser, 2023) and is crucial for guiding organizations through challenging times (Lybarger, 2024). Leaders who demonstrate clear and transparent communication, sound decision-making, and effective teamwork significantly shape their organization's response to crises (Leadership Circle, 2024). By exhibiting strong crisis leadership competencies, they are better equipped to lead their institutions and navigate the complexities of crises successfully. Another key factor in organizational agility is emotional intelligence. Leaders with high emotional intelligence cultivate trust, foster effective communication, and strengthen unity and coordination within their teams (Georgieff, 2022), thereby enhancing their capacity to lead effectively (Mischke, 2022). By exhibiting these capabilities, leaders enable their institutions to remain adaptable, resilient, and agile in the face of challenges.

Furthermore, the adversity quotient serves as a crucial component of organizational agility. The adversity quotient enables leaders to demonstrate resilience, foster productivity and innovation, and thrive in the face of adversity (Baroa, 2015). Leaders with high adversity quotient positively influence agility by enabling employees to withstand challenges and maintain performance (Saadu-Wavemaker, 2023). Taken together, crisis leadership, emotional intelligence, and adversity quotient emerge as critical leadership competencies that shape the organizational agility of higher education institutions, enabling them to withstand challenges and thrive in an increasingly uncertain environment.

In Region XI, private higher education institutions are not immune to the effects of crises. Some institutions continue to grapple with the aftermath of the pandemic. At the same time, the majority face ongoing challenges caused by natural disasters, economic instability, technological advancements, and growing competition among higher education institutions. The ability of these institutions to withstand and recover from such crises is primarily shaped by the crisis leadership, emotional intelligence, and adversity quotient of their academic leaders. Despite the importance of these factors, their combined influence on private higher education institutions has yet to be fully explored, highlighting a significant gap that this study aims to address. Therefore, investigating the relationships among these variables is essential to strengthening the sustainability, adaptability, and agility of private higher education institutions.

The findings drawn from this study will help bridge the gap in the existing literature and serve as a foundation for developing sustainable programs and policies that enable academic leaders to effectively navigate crises and complexities, while ensuring the agility of their institutions. Moreover, this study will contribute to the realization of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which emphasizes the importance of ensuring inclusive and equitable access to education. Thus, resilient, adaptable, and agile higher education institutions ensure the continuity of learning and guarantee access to quality education.

FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in several theoretical frameworks and concepts that collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the organizational agility of private HEIs. First is the conceptual model of crisis leadership competencies of Riggio and Newstead (2023), which identifies the essential skills, namely sense-making, decision-making, communicating, coordinating teamwork, and facilitating learning. Hence, in this study, these competencies equip academic leaders with the ability to guide and lead their institutions effectively through uncertainty, ensuring the organizational agility of private higher education institutions amid crises.

The Emotional Intelligence Theory, as proposed by Goleman (1995), also serves as a guiding framework for this study, highlighting the crucial role of managing one's own emotions and those of others in effective leadership. In the context of this study, the emotional intelligence of leaders fosters an environment characterized by trust, collaboration, and a positive culture. Thus, emotionally intelligent leaders enable their institutions to remain adaptable, flexible, and responsive to changes.

Additionally, Stoltz's CO_2RE Dimensions of Adversity Quotient serves as a foundation for this study, emphasizing human resilience and the ability to cope with challenges, stress, and complexity (Biswas & Banerjee, 2020; Zhao & Sang, 2023). It highlights the significance of adversity quotient's four components, namely control, origin, and ownership, reach, and endurance in effectively adapting to complexities. Hence, in this study, the adversity quotient of academic leaders enables them to maintain their resilience, thereby contributing to the development of agile private higher education institutions (HEIs).

Furthermore, Uhl-Bien and Arena's Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT) emphasizes leadership as an adaptive, process-oriented, and participatory function that enables organizations to respond effectively to complex and dynamic environments (Towler, 2020; Uhl-Bien, 2021). This framework integrates three interdependent leadership functions: operational, entrepreneurial, and enabling leadership (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2017). The interplay of these leadership functions equips private higher education institutions to navigate crises effectively, adapt to uncertainties, and thrive in an increasingly changing landscape.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to develop a structural model of organizational agility by examining how academic leaders' crisis leadership, emotional intelligence, and adversity quotient influence the organizational agility of private higher education institutions (HEIs) in Region XI. Specifically, it aimed to evaluate the level of crisis leadership exhibited by academic leaders across seven key attributes: compassion and care, openness and communication, adaptability, resilience and courage, decisiveness, consultation and collaboration, and employee empowerment. The study also examined academic leaders' emotional intelligence in terms of self-awareness, managing emotions, motivating oneself, empathy, and social skill.

Furthermore, the study aimed to examine the level of adversity quotient among academic leaders across three attributes, namely: resilience, grit, and endurance. It also sought to determine the extent of organizational agility demonstrated by private HEIs in terms of sensing agility, decision-making agility, and acting agility.

In addition, the study aimed to investigate whether a relationship exists between organizational agility and three key factors: crisis leadership, emotional intelligence, and adversity quotient. The first four research questions were descriptive in nature, while the final research question tested a null hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis posited that no significant relationship exists between organizational agility, crisis leadership, emotional intelligence, and adversity quotient. Guided by these research questions and hypothesis, the study sought to provide meaningful insights into how academic leaders' crisis leadership, emotional intelligence, and adversity quotient influence the organizational agility of private higher education institutions.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed descriptive-correlational research designs. Descriptive research focuses on observing and collecting data on a specific phenomenon to provide a comprehensive understanding of the population under study (Sirisilla, 2023). On the other hand, correlational design examines the relationships between or among two or more variables within a single group (Devi et al., 2023). Taken together, these approaches were used to measure, describe, and determine the correlations among academic leaders' crisis leadership, emotional intelligence, adversity quotient, and organizational agility of private higher education institutions (HEIs).

Research Setting

The study was conducted among private higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Davao Region, officially designated as Region XI, which comprises five provinces: Davao de Oro, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao Oriental, and Davao Occidental. Private HEIs in this region were chosen as the study setting because they face significant challenges, including intense competition among colleges and universities, vulnerability to natural disasters, and economic constraints resulting from their dependence on tuition fees, with some institutions operating under limited resources. Assessing their organizational agility is therefore critical to ensuring their survival, maintaining their competitiveness, and sustaining their capacity to deliver quality education.

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The participants of this study were four hundred thirteen (413) academic leaders from a total of forty-one (41) CHED-recognized private higher education institutions (HEIs) in Region XI during the school year 2024–2025. Excluded from participation were forty (40) private HEIs that declined the researcher's request for data gathering.

Specifically, the participants were school administrators such as presidents, vice presidents, deans, directors, and office heads of private HEIs, who were purposively selected through census sampling or total enumeration. Excluded from the study were program heads, coordinators, and employees in line management or those without managerial functions.

Research Instruments

The study utilized four (4) sets of questionnaires, which were standardized, adapted, and modified. The first set of questionnaires is the Crisis Leadership Questionnaire, an adapted instrument based from Balasubramanian and Fernandes' (2022) research, entitled "Confirmation of a Crisis Leadership Model and Its Effectiveness: Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic." The questionnaire has a 58-item test that measures the level of crisis leadership of academic leaders in terms of Compassion and Care, Openness and Communication, Adaptiveness, Resilience and Courage, Decisiveness, Consultation and Collaboration, and Employee Empowerment.

The second set of questionnaires is the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, a standardized questionnaire from NHS England (2014). The questionnaire has a 50-item test that measures the academic leaders' emotional intelligence in terms of Self-awareness, Managing Emotions, Motivating Oneself, Empathy, and Social Skill.

The third set of questionnaires is the Adversity Quotient Questionnaire, which comprises three standardized questionnaires: the Brief Resilience Scale (Smith et al., 2008), the 12-Item Grit Scale (Duckworth et al., 2007), and the Psychological Endurance Scale (Hamby et al., 2015). The questionnaire has a 28-item test that measures the adversity quotient of academic leaders in terms of resilience, grit, and endurance.

The fourth set of questionnaires is the Organizational Agility Questionnaire, which was modified and adapted from Nafei's (2016) The Role of Organizational Agility in Enhancing Organizational Excellence: A Study on Telecommunications Sector in Egypt. This questionnaire has 40 items that determine the level of organizational agility of private HEIs in terms of Sensing Agility, Decision-making Agility, and Acting Agility.

Data Gathering Procedure

Several research protocols and procedures were followed in obtaining the data for the study. The researcher communicated with the Liceo de Cagayan University Research Ethics Board regarding the requirements for securing ethical clearance. After identifying the requirements needed for an ethical clearance, the researcher conducted a pilot test of the survey questionnaires on thirty (30) academic leaders of private HEIs in Region XII. Additionally, the researcher obtained all the necessary letters, including the endorsement letter signed by the Dean of the Graduate School of Liceo de Cagayan University, as well as permission letters addressed to the presidents of private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) in Region XI. After which, the researcher sent the requirements to the Liceo de Cagayan University Research Ethics Board for an initial expedited review. After the initial review, the researcher worked out the suggestions of the Liceo de Cagayan University Research Ethics Board. Version 2 of the requirements was sent to the Liceo de Cagayan University Research Ethics Board for approval of the ethical clearance.

Upon securing research ethical clearance, the researcher then obtained permission and consent from the participants. They were asked to answer the survey questionnaire by providing them with a printed copy. Additionally, a Google Form link to the survey questionnaire was provided for those who wish to answer it online. They were given two (2) weeks to answer the survey. After the agreed period of time, survey questionnaires were collected, tabulated and consolidated for statistical analysis and interpretation.

Statistical Treatment and Data Analysis

The study employed descriptive statistics, namely mean and standard deviation for problems 1-4, to determine the levels of academic leaders' crisis leadership, in terms of Compassion and Care, Openness and Communication, Adaptiveness, Resilience and Courage, Decisiveness, Consultation and Collaboration, and Employee Empowerment; emotional intelligence in terms of Self-awareness, Managing Emotions, Motivating Oneself, Empathy, and Social Skill; adversity quotient in terms of Resilience, Grit, and Endurance; and the level of organizational agility of private HEIs in terms of Sensing Agility, Decision-making Agility, and Acting Agility.

Moreover, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was utilized for problem 5 to determine the correlation between the level of organizational agility of private HEIs and the crisis leadership, emotional intelligence, and adversity quotient of academic leaders. Pearson's correlation coefficient serves as a simple yet effective approach to determine whether two variables share variance, identify the direction of their relationship (positive or negative), and measure the extent of their correlation (Chee, 2015). Through the utilization of this tool, the study was also able to examine the strength of the relationship between organizational agility and crisis leadership, organizational agility and emotional intelligence, and organizational agility and adversity quotient.

Validity and Reliability

Reliability and validity tests were conducted for the four sets of questionnaires. It underwent a content validity test by three (3) experts in the field of research and was pilot tested on thirty (30) academic leaders of private HEIs in Region XII. Results of the pilot test for the four (4) questionnaires revealed reliable results with a Cronbach's alpha value of greater than or equal to 0.7.

Specifically, the Crisis Leadership Questionnaire pilot test yielded reliable results, with Cronbach's alphas of 0.912, 0.910, 0.840, 0.909, 0.934, 0.874, and 0.906 for the indicators of compassion and care, openness and communication, adaptiveness, resilience and courage, decisiveness, consultation and collaboration, and employee empowerment. The Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire pilot test also yielded reliable results with Cronbach's alphas of .884, .906, .880, .916, and .880 for the indicators of self-awareness, managing emotions, managing oneself, empathy, and social skill. Moreover, the Adversity Quotient Questionnaire pilot test yielded reliable results, with Cronbach's alphas of 0.848, 0.891, and 0.782 for the indicators of grit, resilience, and endurance, respectively. Lastly, the Organizational Agility Questionnaire pilot test yielded reliable results, with Cronbach's alphas of 0.968, 0.976, and 0.978 for the indicators of sensing agility, decision-making agility, and acting agility, respectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Summary of The Level of Crisis Leadership of Academic Leaders

Sub-constructs	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
Compassion and Care	4.52	.473	Strongly Agree	Very High
Openness and Communication	4.40	.484	Agree	High
Adaptiveness	4.15	.519	Agree	High
Resilience and Courage	4.32	.496	Agree	High
Decisiveness	4.25	.532	Agree	High
Consultation and Collaboration	4.43	.479	Agree	High
Employee Empowerment	4.42	.496	Agree	High
Overall Mean	4.36	.420	Agree	High

The study assessed the level of crisis leadership of academic leaders across seven indicators: Compassion and Care, Openness and Communication, Adaptiveness, Resilience and Courage, Decisiveness, Consultation and Collaboration, and Employee Empowerment. The findings reveal a High Level of Crisis Leadership among academic leaders, with an overall mean score of 4.36 (SD = 0.420) across the seven sub-constructs. This result underscores the essential role of compassion and care, openness and communication, adaptability, resilience, courage, decisiveness, consultation, collaboration, and employee empowerment in effective crisis leadership. These findings align with Riggio and Newstead (2023), who emphasized the importance of crisis leadership competencies in navigating complex and uncertain situations.

The highest mean score of 4.52 for Compassion and Care reflects the strong agreement among academic leaders regarding the significant contributions of compassionate leadership behaviors, such as care, understanding, and empathy, toward their team members during crises. The finding is supported by Jacques (2022), who highlighted that compassion builds a solid foundation for organizational recovery in times of challenging situations. Leaders who demonstrate understanding, compassion, and care in times of crisis foster trust (Gillespie et al., 2020), create a sense of togetherness (Balasubramanian & Fernandes, 2022), and improve employee well-being (Pansini et al., 2024). Nielsen et al. (2020) further argued that leaders' compassionate and caring behaviors foster resilience and enable their organizations to thrive and survive in complex situations. Meanwhile, the lowest mean score of 4.15 obtained by the Adaptiveness sub-construct still highlights the respondents' strong consensus regarding the significant contributions of flexibility and adaptability in challenging situations. Academic leaders respond effectively to crises, adopt new approaches, and align their strategies with the evolving needs of their institutions. This highlights the critical role adaptability plays during crises (Szemzo et al., 2022). Adaptable leaders foster a culture that embraces flexibility, encourages creativity and innovation, and supports continuous learning and effective problem-solving (Sott & Bender, 2025). Thus, adaptability is a vital leadership competency that enables academic leaders to strengthen the organizational agility of private HEIs.

Ultimately, the results underscore that academic leaders of private HEIs exhibit a high level of crisis leadership, with strong competencies across compassion and care, openness and communication, resilience and courage, consultation and collaboration, employee empowerment, decisiveness, and adaptiveness. These leadership qualities collectively enhance resilience, foster innovation, and build trust, enabling academic leaders to navigate crises more effectively. By embodying these competencies, academic leaders improve their institution's stability, survival, and competitiveness in a rapidly changing environment.

Table 2 Summary of The The Level of Emotional Intelligence of Academic Leaders

Sub-constructs	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
Self-Awareness	4.40	.470	Agree	High
Managing Emotions	4.04	.562	Agree	High
Motivating Oneself	4.21	.527	Agree	High
Empathy	4.20	.505	Agree	High
Social Skill	4.16	.549	Agree	High
Overall Mean	4.20	.435	Agree	High

The study also investigated the level of emotional intelligence of academic leaders across five key dimensions: Self-awareness, Managing Emotions, Motivating Oneself, Empathy, and Social Skill. The findings reveal an overall mean score of 4.20 (SD = 0.435) across all five dimensions. This indicates that academic leaders possess a high level of emotional intelligence, particularly in the areas of self-awareness, managing emotions, motivating oneself, empathy, and social skills. Moreover, this aligns with Goleman's (1995) Emotional Intelligence Theory, which asserts that these competencies are central for effective leadership. Academic leaders with high emotional intelligence can remain composed under pressure, foster trust and collaboration, inspire and motivate their teams, and cultivate positive relationships. Emotional intelligence, therefore, is a critical factor that equips academic leaders to navigate crises and sustain the competitiveness and enhance the resilience of their organizations in a rapidly changing environment.

In particular, the highest mean score of 4.40 for Self-Awareness indicates a strong agreement among academic leaders regarding their ability to recognize and understand their own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. This further suggests that self-awareness enables academic leaders to manage themselves and engage in meaningful interactions with others effectively. In addition to this, self-aware leaders can effectively manage their own behavior, exercise sound judgment, and make informed decisions, while also fostering strong interpersonal connections with others. All of these are particularly important during crises, wherein the clarity and composure of leaders are essential for effective leadership. As emphasized by Westover (2024), effective leaders successfully navigate organizational changes with resilience. This is corroborated by Asmamaw and Semela (2023), who highlighted that the ability of leaders to become self-aware enhances their effectiveness and efficiency in leading organizations. In addition to these, self-aware leaders cultivate collaboration, trust, and morale, while also driving organizational performance (International Hospital Federation, 2023). These, in turn, strengthen the resilience and agility of organizations.

Meanwhile, the lowest mean score of 4.04 for the Managing Emotions sub-construct still reflects a shared agreement among academic leaders on the crucial role of emotional management skills in effective leadership. These were highlighted in the study by Torrence and Connelly (2019). Additionally, literature and several findings have further emphasized that leaders who effectively regulate their emotions remain composed in high-pressure situations (Landry, 2019). Academic leaders who can regulate their emotions make balanced decisions and respond constructively to challenges. Such ability also fosters a supportive environment that enables their team members to navigate crises with confidence and clarity. Undeniably, managing emotions is a vital leadership competency that enables academic leaders to remain composed and make sound decisions, which in turn enhances the overall effectiveness of private higher education institutions during challenging times.

Finally, the findings evidently show that academic leaders in private HEIs possess a high level of emotional intelligence, as reflected in the consistently high mean scores across all five sub-constructs. This enables them to remain calm and composed during crises, inspire and motivate their teams, and cultivate a culture grounded in trust and collaboration. Such qualities position them to navigate crises with confidence, which contributes to their organizations' ability to become agile amidst challenges.

Table 3 Summary of The Level of Adversity Quotient of Academic Leaders

Sub-constructs	Mean	SD	escription	Interpretation
Resilience	3.84	.609	Agree	High
Grit	3.90	.578	Agree	High
Endurance	4.32	.535	Agree	High
Overall Mean	4.02	.498	Agree	High

In terms of the level of adversity quotient of academic leaders as ascertained by three sub-concepts: Resilience, Grit, and Endurance, the findings reveal a High Level of Adversity Quotient among academic leaders, with an overall mean score of 4.02 (SD = 0.498) across the three sub-constructs. Academic leaders possess the capacity to withstand challenges and adapt effectively in the face of difficulties. Such ability underscores their competence in coping with adversities and sustaining performance even under adverse conditions, which is vital for ensuring organizational stability and resilience. The results further validate the relevance of Stoltz's (1997) Adversity Quotient framework in understanding how academic leaders' adversity quotient contributes to the

ability of private higher education institutions to recover from crises. Thus, the findings underscore the indispensable role of adversity quotient in navigating organizational complexities.

Notably, the highest mean score of 4.32 for Endurance indicates a strong consensus among academic leaders regarding their capacity to persist and withstand adversity over extended periods. Leaders who develop a sound understanding of adversities can foster greater adaptability and agility, and cultivate a genuine trust among their stakeholders (Venkatesh et al., 2015), which in turn strengthens leadership effectiveness (Baroa, 2015). Therefore, academic leaders who remain steadfast in pursuing long-term institutional goals are more likely to sustain their performance during prolonged periods of crisis.

Moreover, the mean score of 3.84 for Resilience indicates a high level of resilience, although it is lower than endurance and grit. The high mean score suggests that academic leaders adapt effectively to challenges, recover from setbacks, and maintain their emotional strength in the face of adversities. Several studies have highlighted the significant role of resilience in navigating and thriving in the face of constant change (Deep, 2023). Highly resilient leaders are more capable of sustaining performance under pressure and recovering quickly from adverse experiences (Liang & Cao, 2021). These underscore resilience as an indispensable leadership competency that enhances the effectiveness and organizational agility of academic leaders. The standard deviation of 0.609 indicates moderate variability, which suggests that while many academic leaders demonstrate strong adaptability and resilience, others may require further development in their ability to recover from setbacks. This emphasizes the importance of implementing strategic capacity-enhancement efforts and leadership training programs that would strengthen academic leaders' adaptability and resilience, ensuring the effective navigation of challenges.

Finally, the findings imply that academic leaders in private higher education institutions exhibit a high level of Adversity Quotient, with particular strength in endurance. Such competency equips academic leaders to persist in their pursuit of long-term goals, recover from setbacks, and sustain their performance under challenging situations. Therefore, the adversity quotient plays a crucial role in the successful management of complexities arising from crises, particularly in the context of private higher education institutions.

Table 4 Summary of The Level of Organizational Agility of Private Heis

Sub-constructs	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
Sensing Agility	3.96	.654	Agree	High
Decision-making Agility	4.03	.632	Agree	High
Acting Agility	4.02	.678	Agree	High
Overall Mean	4.00	.627	Agree	High

The study assessed the level of organizational agility of private HEIs across three indicators: Sensing agility, Decision-making agility, and Acting agility. The findings reveal a High Level of organizational agility among private HEIs, with an overall mean score of 4.00 (SD = 0.627) across the three sub-constructs. This suggests that private HEIs respond highly to changes, adapt to evolving educational demands, and maintain flexibility in processes and decision-making. The results further validate the relevance of Uhl-Bien and Arena's (2017) Complexity Leadership Theory, which views organizations as complex adaptive systems where agility emerges from the capacity to respond flexibly to unpredictable changes. Applying the principles of this theory enables academic leaders of private higher education institutions to navigate complex situations, respond effectively to emerging challenges, and sustain institutional resilience and competitiveness in the changing environment.

The highest mean score of 4.03 for Decision-Making Agility indicates that private HEIs possess a strong capacity to make timely, effective, and adaptive decisions. Kane et al. (2021) highlight the critical role of decisive action in enabling higher education institutions to navigate challenges effectively during times of adversity. Furthermore, Thurmer et al. (2020) emphasized that while speed in decision-making is important during crises, effectiveness and accuracy are of paramount importance. Thus, poorly informed decisions can lead to unintended consequences, undermine organizational stability, and compromise the organization's ability to respond effectively to challenges. Similarly, Iftikhar et al. (2023) emphasized that accurate and timely decision-making is a crucial component of effective leadership, enabling organizations to navigate crises successfully and maintain their resilience. Hence, making timely, accurate, and effective decisions is one of the key drivers in

strengthening the organizational agility of private higher education institutions.

Moreover, the lowest mean score of 3.96 for Sensing Agility still indicates that private higher education institutions (PHEIs) are generally effective at detecting, interpreting, and anticipating changes in their external and internal environments. This further suggests that private HEIs recognize emerging trends, identify potential opportunities or threats, and proactively adjust strategies and operations to maintain their relevance and competitiveness. Gray (2022) emphasized that an organization's ability to identify and address opportunities and threats allows it to stay informed of ongoing environmental changes and adapt its strategies effectively. Similarly, studies have shown that an organization's ability to interpret and make sense of its environment constitutes a crucial component of organizational agility (Yahia Marzouk & Jin, 2022). Therefore, the high degree of sensing agility demonstrated by private HEIs facilitates their adaptability, which, therefore, enhances their resilience.

Finally, the results indicate that private HEIs in Region XI exhibit a high level of organizational agility, reflecting their adaptability, responsiveness, and competitiveness. Even though some variation exists in the responses of the respondents, private HEIs are still well-equipped to sustain their effectiveness despite the changing and evolving environment.

Significant Relationships between Crisis Leadership, Emotional, Intelligence, Adversity Quotient, and Organizational Agility

The results in Pearson R Correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between organizational agility and three key variables: crisis leadership, emotional intelligence, and adversity quotient. The findings further demonstrate variables such as adaptiveness, crisis leadership, managing emotions, motivating oneself, social skill, emotional intelligence, resilience, grit, and adversity quotient, exhibit a strong positive and statistically significant relationship with organizational agility, with correlation coefficients ranging above 0.50 (e.g., r=0.517 - 0.605). Moreover, the rejection of the null hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance, along with the strong correlations, substantiates the significant contributions of the examined predictors to organizational agility. This entails the need to strengthen the crisis leadership, emotional intelligence, and adversity quotient among academic leaders, as well as members in academic institutions. Hence, developing crisis-ready, emotionally intelligent, and resilient leaders is crucial for private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to effectively adapt to change, overcome disruptive challenges, and recover from crises.

Organizational Agility and Crisis Leadership

The study confirms that Crisis Leadership, encompassing Compassion and Care ($r = 0.380$, $p < 0.05$), Openness and Communication ($r = 0.446$, $p < 0.05$), and Adaptiveness ($r = 0.517$, $p < 0.05$), as well as Resilience and Courage ($r = 0.433$, $p < 0.05$).05, Decisiveness ($r=0.485$, $p<.05$, Consultation and Collaboration($r=0.393$, $p<.05$), and Employee Empowerment ($r=0.414$, $p<0.05$), significantly correlates with Organizational Agility. These findings indicate that these crisis leadership competencies demonstrated by academic leaders are crucial drivers of organizational agility in private HEIs. This is consistent with the Crisis Leadership Competency Model (Riggio & Newstead, 2023), which identifies key competencies of leaders in navigating unforeseen crises. Indeed, Crisis Leadership ($r = 0.521$) has a significant role in enhancing the agility of organizations, particularly private higher education institutions (HEIs). This finding is consistent with the study by Njaramba and Olukuru (2025), which highlighted that leadership which fosters personal growth, innovation, and teamwork significantly and positively contributes to organizational resilience. This is further supported by the findings of Biju (2025), which revealed that highly resilient organizations share common leadership characteristics, including decision-making, adaptability, and collaboration. Such crisis leadership traits are crucial for fostering resilience and enabling organizations to thrive in challenging situations.

Moreover, among the crisis leadership competencies, Adaptiveness and Decisiveness show the strongest correlations, suggesting that the ability to adapt to change and make firm decisions during challenging times is particularly influential in enhancing the organizational agility of private higher education institutions (HEIs). As Arifin and Purwanti (2023) revealed, leaders who possess adaptability and decision-making significantly contribute to enhancing the overall agility of the organization. Similarly, the study by Kwasek et al. (2025)

emphasized the significant relationship between accurate decision-making and organizational agility. Moreover, these were corroborated by several findings that discussed the critical roles of adaptability and flexibility (Su, 2024) and effective decision-making (Kwasek et al., 2025) in fostering organizational resilience and effective crisis response. Overall, cultivating crisis-ready leadership competencies is essential to ensure that private HEIs remain responsive, resilient, and agile in the face of adversities.

Organizational Agility and Emotional Intelligence

The study reveals that Emotional Intelligence, in terms of Self-Awareness($r=0.394$, $p<0.05$), Managing Emotions ($r=0.518$, $p<.05$), Motivating Oneself ($r=0.574$, $p<.05$), Empathy ($r=0.467$, $p<.05$), and Social Skill ($r=0.548$, $p<.05$) significantly correlates with Organizational Agility. These findings align with the Emotional Intelligence Theory (Goleman, 1995), which posits that a leader's ability to understand and manage both their own emotions and the emotions of others is crucial to effective leadership and organizational performance. Thus, emotional intelligence serves as a foundational driver of organizational agility of private higher education institutions. This corroborates the study of Pazhouhan et al. (2019), whose findings revealed the meaningful connection between emotional intelligence and organizational agility. In addition, similar studies (Bhatt & Sable, 2024) also highlighted the significant and positive contribution of emotional intelligence toward agility. Academic leaders who exhibit higher levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to contribute to an organization that is adaptive and resilient. Thus, these results emphasize the importance of integrating emotional intelligence development into leadership training programs and human resource strategies aimed at strengthening the organizational agility of private HEIs.

Among the identified domains, Motivating Oneself and Social Skill yielded the strongest correlations, suggesting that the ability to maintain personal drive and foster meaningful interpersonal relationships plays a crucial role in enhancing an organization's agility. This corroborates previous studies, which have highlighted the significant role of motivation (Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020) and social skill (Bella, 2023) in achieving positive organizational outcomes.

Organizational Agility and Adversity Quotient

The study reveals that the Adversity Quotient, comprising Resilience ($r = 0.529$, $p < 0.05$), Grit ($r = 0.535$, $p < 0.05$), and Endurance ($r = 0.448$, $p < 0.05$), exhibits a significant correlation with Organizational Agility. These results imply that the ability of academic leaders to persist, bounce back, and withstand prolonged difficulty becomes central to maintaining agility in the context of private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) when facing crises such as the recent pandemic, natural disasters, policy shifts, financial instability, technological transformation, market competition, and other disruptive changes and challenges. Since the adversity quotient is an underexplored topic in the aspect of leadership and organization, there is very little literature and studies provide findings about the role of the adversity quotient on organizational agility. Despite this, several studies have revealed a positive and significant link between the adversity quotient and job performance (Sulastry et al., 2023), where job performance is significantly correlated with organizational agility (Usman, 2023). These clearly demonstrate how the adversity quotient significantly contributes to positive outcomes (Tansiongco & Ibarra, 2020). As Murugesan (2021) stresses, leaders with high adversity quotient enhance organizational productivity, creativity, and employee capacity. Such are key drivers for effectively navigating challenges and fostering organizational agility. Thus, fostering a high adversity quotient among academic leaders is a key strategy for enhancing the overall capacity of private higher education institutions to operate agilely and adaptively.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

Academic leaders in private HEIs exhibit a high level of crisis leadership, demonstrating their capability to lead with compassion, adaptability, and resilience in times of disruption. The prominence of compassion and care highlights the vital role of academic leaders' empathy, understanding, care, and supportive leadership in fostering trust, collaboration, and stability within private HEIs during crises. Hence, leaders who embody crisis leadership

competencies effectively navigate challenges and enhance their institution's stability, survival, and competitiveness in a rapidly changing environment. Additionally, the study identifies opportunities for improvement and growth in the area of adaptiveness, thereby strengthening leaders' capacity to respond to crises, adopt innovative approaches, and align strategies with the evolving needs of their institutions.

Further, academic leaders also demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence across five key dimensions, with the highest scores exhibited in self-awareness and the lowest in managing emotions. While the findings indicate a high level of self-awareness among academic leaders, deliberate efforts are necessary to develop their emotional regulation skills further and ensure balanced and effective leadership. Hence, this points to the establishment of leadership development programs which build on leaders' strong self-awareness while strengthening training in emotional regulation, as this competency is critical for maintaining composure and sound judgment in times of crises.

The adversity quotient of academic leaders in private HEIs is also at a high level, which reflects their ability to withstand challenges and respond effectively in the face of adversities. Hence, this underscores their competence in coping with challenges and sustaining their performance even under adverse conditions. The study further emphasized a high level of endurance, which reflects academic leaders' high capacity to persist over extended periods. In addition, it also highlights an opportunity to improve resilience, highlighting the need for targeted capacity-building initiatives and leadership development programs in this aspect.

Moreover, organizational agility is at a high level, as indicated by its sensing agility, decision-making agility, and acting agility scores. This reflects private HEIs' sustained resilience, competitiveness, and effectiveness amid changing environments. Hence, continuous investment in leadership development, strategic planning, and institutional innovation is needed to sustain the organizational agility of private HEIs. Particularly, strengthening the decision-making frameworks, enhancing sensing mechanisms, and fostering a culture of well-coordinated actions are essential. By doing so, private HEIs can respond effectively to immediate challenges and secure long-term sustainability, relevance, and growth within the dynamic and changing environments.

Furthermore, academic leaders' crisis leadership, emotional intelligence, and adversity quotient significantly contribute to the organizational agility of private HEIs based on the Pearson R Correlation analysis. The significant correlations suggest that improving these areas will lead to greater agility among private higher education institutions. Therefore, there is a need for institutions to integrate crisis leadership competencies, emotional intelligence, and resilience training into professional development frameworks to build a pool of leaders capable of navigating challenges and uncertainties while driving long-term institutional success toward building resilient and agile organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Future researchers and scholars may conduct longitudinal examinations of private HEIs to track how their organizational agility evolves over time and to determine whether specific leadership behaviors lead to sustained improvements after a crisis. They may also explore the impact of adversity quotient across different domains, as it remains one of the least examined and understudied areas in leadership and organizational studies. Moreover, conducting studies across broader contexts, expanding sample sizes, including more diverse respondent groups, and incorporating qualitative research methods may yield more comprehensive insights into the dynamics of organizational agility among higher education institutions.

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